



# How to Organize a Waterway Cleanup

## Tips, Information, and FAQs

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Rivers Alive is Georgia's annual volunteer waterway cleanup event that targets all waterways in the State including streams, rivers, lakes, beaches, and wetlands. The mission of Rivers Alive is to create awareness of and involvement in the preservation of Georgia's water resources. The information in this manual is designed to walk you through the process of organizing a cleanup, making the best use of your time, effort and resources for a successful event.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Organizing a cleanup takes a great deal of planning and preparation, but it is well worth it in the end.

### **Where is the Rivers Alive organizer information located on the website?**

All Rivers Alive organizer information is posted at <https://Riversalive.Georgia.Gov/> under the "Organize a Cleanup" tab. Registered cleanups will receive additional materials via e-mail and regular mail.

### **What are the steps to start a Rivers Alive cleanup?**

Here is a checklist for getting started, followed by explanations:

- Organize a suitable planning group
- Select an appropriate site
- Register your event
- Line up support and supplies
- Arrange for disposal and recycling
- Publicize the event
- Recruit volunteers
- Coordinate your volunteers

### **Organize a suitable planning group**

The average cleanup event involves a wide variety of tasks, from publicity and financing to parking and sanitation. Luckily, a community is made up of people with a wide variety of skills, and in a well-chosen planning group you will almost always find the perfect person for every job.

### **Who should I include in my planning group?**

Invite members from local government, civic organizations and clubs, homeowner associations, churches and chambers of commerce to serve on a cleanup planning committee. Also consider involving people with knowledge of cleanup campaigns, such as park and recreation officials and members of local, state and federal environmental and health agencies to assist you. Because community campaigns live or die on publicity and promotion, enlist the local newspaper editor and radio or TV station managers.

### **Once I have my planning group, what is next?**

Write out the specific objectives and an outline of what will be done, who will do it, and the specific results you want to achieve. By dividing the work

among committees, you will allow each person's skills a chance to shine. It may also be helpful to list those who will benefit from specific tasks. A written list of objectives helps planners stay within goals, and helps in recruiting people by allowing volunteers to relate to something concrete. It also provides a yardstick for measuring progress and success.

### **Selecting an appropriate site**

#### **Are cleanups conducted on public or private property?**

Cleanups can be conducted on public property or with permission on private property.

#### **How do I know who owns the land? What should I do if it is private?**

If you are not sure who owns the land, check with your local tax commissioner's office. Let the property owner know what you are doing, when you will be there and if possible ask if they would be willing to provide any assistance (especially if it is a company or government owned property).

#### **How do I select a site?**

Select a site (or sites) that provides you and your group with safe and easy access, an adequate size to carry out the cleanup based on number of volunteers expected, and convenient access to parking.

#### **How large should the site be?**

Choose a site of workable size within a convenient distance for volunteers. The site should be large enough that volunteers will have plenty of work to do and small enough that they can complete the job and see their accomplishments.



#### **I have a large site, should I divide the cleanup into sections? If so, how?**

Depending on the size and location of your cleanup, you may want to divide the site to be cleaned into workable areas or zones. To make zones, first obtain or create a map of the site. Google Maps ([www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)) has both street and topographic layers that can help you map your site. Outline the area to be cleaned on the map, and then visit the site. Determine the natural boundaries or breaks in the landscape such as rivers, roads, ravines and cliffs and note them on the map, then divide up the site. It may be useful to lay a grid over the map to make sure zones are of equal size and workload. Mark the zones clearly on the map and determine where you will need to put zone markers. Be sure when you plan your zones that they are easily accessible from a road or trail.

One technique that has worked well in the past for coordinators of large projects is to print a small map of each zone, along with directions to reach it from a central point. As volunteers register, he or she is assigned to one of these zones and given a map. This eliminates confusion over who is to clean which areas, allows volunteers to familiarize themselves with the site ahead of time, and speeds up the on-site registration process.

**The site I want to clean has limited parking. What are some options in order to handle this dilemma?**

If your proposed cleanup area is not easily accessible or you have several widely scattered sites, consider providing transportation or car-pooling. Have a central meeting location for volunteers and arrange a shuttle system to transport crews to their designated sites.

**What else should I be aware of in regards to the site? Traffic? Sanitation?**

Evaluate access roads to see if traffic routing or directional signs will be needed. Arrange any needed traffic detours or other assistance at work sites with the police department. If no sanitation facilities are nearby, arrange for portable toilets. Volunteers will also need to be able to wash their hands, especially if refreshments are provided, so look for running water or plan to provide hand sanitizer.

Once you've selected an appropriate site, Rivers Alive urges you to register your event.

**Registering an event**

To register an event, visit [RiversAlive.Georgia.Gov](http://RiversAlive.Georgia.Gov), click on '[Manage Your Event](#)' and then the 'Register a New Event' button.

**Why does Rivers Alive need my contact information?**

You will be asked to provide your contact information so that Rivers Alive will be able to get in touch with you and direct potential volunteers to your event.

**What will I need to know in order to fill out the registration form?**

For publicity purposes, you will be asked for the names of all the organizations participating in the cleanup. You will also be asked for the name and location of your waterway, the watershed it is in (a map is provided on the website) and the date and time of your cleanup. If you are requesting free souvenir T-shirts, we will need an estimate of the number of volunteers you expect to participate and a break down of the T-shirt sizes requested.

**What will happen when I fill out a registration form on the Rivers Alive website?**

By filling out a registration form online at [www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov](http://www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov), your cleanup will become a part of our statewide program. Information about your event will be placed on our website, providing instant publicity. You will receive a variety of promotional materials, including T-shirts for groups that register before July 31<sup>st</sup>. Posters, a sponsorship request letter template, a local press release template and radio Public Service Announcements (PSA) for distribution will also be available. Finally, you will be placed on the Rivers Alive contact list and will be notified as further information and resources become available.

**Will T-shirts be available for those that register events after July 31<sup>st</sup>?**

Those groups that register after the July 31<sup>st</sup> deadline may still receive Rivers Alive T-shirts *only if extras are available*.

**Support and supplies**

Community campaigns require supplies and may cost money, so line up ample support early.

**What type of supplies will I need?**

Depending on location and size, you will need to have these supplies on hand:

- Gloves
- Water/Food
- Additional Trash bags
- First Aid kit(s)
- Vehicle(s) to haul the waste away
- Hand sanitizer/cleanser
- Safety vests
- Tool to weigh trash collected



At a minimum, you need gloves, trash bags, and water for participants. Consider having hand cleanser/sanitizer available. Depending on your location, first aid kits readily available is a good idea and you may want to offer volunteers safety vests.

**What will the Rivers Alive program provide in regards to supplies?**

Rivers Alive has secured trash bags through our partnership with the International Coastal Cleanup program, but you may wish to have extra bags on hand because we can only provide approximately one bag per volunteer.

**What about promotional materials?**

Get a rough estimate early on of what you'll need in the way of promotional materials, rental or purchase of special equipment and supplies, and prizes for participants. Prizes may range from certificates to souvenir caps, Rivers Alive T-shirts, and trophies (for most unusual piece of trash removed, etc.).

**What are ways I can obtain the supplies when I don't have the financial means? Can I have an example of a sponsorship request letter?**

Contact business people, club leaders and government officials. Ask them to give what they can: cash, equipment, supplies or services. When approaching potential donors, use the Rivers Alive template sponsorship request letter that can be found on <http://www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov> as a guideline.

**What are some things people or organizations might donate?**

Trash bags are a must and can often be obtained as "in-kind" donations from grocery or supply companies. Trucks to haul the waste to the landfill and recycling center will be needed. Often times the county or city municipality will offer a local waste hauler to help remove debris. Food and drinks for the volunteers are essential and can usually be obtained through donations from restaurants and/or local grocery stores. The local fire department, Red Cross or other emergency medical personnel may be willing to donate first aid kits and supplies, or they may even be interested in volunteering to serve as trained first aid administrators during the cleanup. Your local Department of Transportation may be able to provide orange vests for volunteers to wear. In addition to direct appeals, groups can stage fund-raising activities like bake sales, raffles, flea markets, and auctions.

**Arranging for trash disposal and recycling**

It is important to discard or recycle the litter collected and not leave it for the community or others to handle. To successfully conclude the Rivers Alive event, coordinate a litter pickup.

**Who do I contact to coordinate litter pickups?**

Contact appropriate government officials to arrange litter pickups by sanitation trucks. Generally this is coordinated out of your local solid waste department. Special approval is often required if private vehicles are used to transport trash. Get necessary approval to use municipal or county waste disposal facilities. If there's a dumping fee, seek a waiver. If the sanitation department can't work in a particular area, plan alternative assistance.

**What if we find large or heavy items?**

You may also want to arrange special pickup services for heavy items like stoves, furniture and refrigerators. If you cannot arrange for a special pick up, locate a permitted sanitary landfill for disposal of the collected waste and seek approval to use the facilities.

**Should I recycle items? If so, how and where?**

Recycling will decrease the amount of waste going to the landfill and may help defray the expenses of the cleanup. Select an area near the cleanup site for separating recyclable items, such as glass, aluminum, plastics and tin. Be familiar with what recyclable materials your local recycling center or drop-off sites will accept and how they want the materials prepared. For example, will they accept broken glass? Do caps need to be removed from plastic containers? Will they accept aluminum cans that are filled with mud? Some recyclers prefer clean items, while others don't have requirements. The event coordinator needs to make arrangements for transporting recyclable materials to the nearest available recycler if your community or county does not have a recycling center or drop-off site. Money raised through recycling can help cover cleanup costs, be donated to local charities or schools, or used as "seed" money for future cleanups. For more information on how to recycling, please see "What to Recycle; How to Recycle; How to Prepare it" in the appendix (p. 25).

### **How should I dispose of automobile tires?**

Used automobile tires are common in cleanup projects. It is illegal to dispose of whole tires in city and county landfills, though many landfills do collect them for later recycling. Check with your local sanitation department for regulations regarding tire disposal, or contact the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's scrap tire program at (404) 363-7027.

A list of approved scrap tire processors is available on the EPD's website at [https://epd.georgia.gov/sites/epd.georgia.gov/files/related\\_files/site\\_page/Processors\\_etc\\_list\\_021016.pdf](https://epd.georgia.gov/sites/epd.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Processors_etc_list_021016.pdf)

### **What do I do if I encounter large objects such as junked cars, sheet metal or wooden loading pallets?**

It is tempting to remove these items, but this should not be done without careful consideration and observation. Does it look like the material has been there for a long time? Is it embedded in the stream bank at all? Ugly as this type of litter is, it may be doing more good than harm. The number one problem in Georgia waterways is erosion of stream banks leading to muddy water and sedimentation or "silting-in" of streambeds. Heavy objects on the bank can help prevent erosion by slowing the flow of water and protecting the bare soil from being washed away. If you have helpful but unattractive litter at your site, contact the Natural Resource Conservation Service or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about bank stabilization. They can inspect the site and help you choose an appropriate method of dealing with the problem.





### **Publicize the event**

Good publicity is the best way to attract volunteers and reinforce the idea that everyone can do something to help. Just remember, communication is key.

#### **What are some ways to spark community pride and spirit?**

Choosing a theme or slogan for your event can evoke community pride and spirit while providing focus. Because cleanup events are usually repeated annually, a continuing theme provides long-term name recognition.

#### **What are some ways to publicize the event?**

Work with your local newspaper, television and radio stations to help get your message out. Urge residents to get in the spirit of things and clean up their own property and/or businesses even if they're not volunteering for community cleanup assignments. Also utilize newsletters, church bulletins, schools and speakers' bureaus. Many civic organizations have newsletters and welcome speakers at their meetings. Displaying posters and other printed materials in busy locations is also a good way to reach and inform the public.

#### **What should I include in the announcement?**

If people are going to help, they have to know what's going on and what they're expected to do. As the cleanup event approaches, publicize the times and locations. When you publicize the event, provide a phone number people can call for information and tell participants what to wear and what to bring (reviewed in next section, 'Recruit Volunteers'). Have a backup plan in case the weather doesn't cooperate on the day of the cleanup, such as a backup date (rain date) and include it in your promotional materials.

#### **What does Rivers Alive provide in regards to promotional material?**

Every year, the Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division creates a radio PSA that is distributed to most stations in the state. Most years, Rivers Alive also produces a second Radio PSA that you can distribute to your local radio stations. Check the event organizer section of the Rivers Alive website for a list of the stations and how to order a PSA. Local press releases and promotional posters are also available on the Rivers Alive web page under the organizer section. These can be easily adapted to help promote individual events.

### **Recruit volunteers**

Volunteers will assist with a variety of tasks and will make the event go smoother and a success!

#### **What can I do to recruit volunteers outside of advertising?**

Recruitment can take many forms. Personal phone calls, talks to civic clubs, discussions with elected officials and appeals at public meetings can all be effective. Tailor your message to fit your audience. For instance, the local fire and police associations could be recruited to handle safety and parking.

Rivers Alive has a general power point presentation about the program that event organizers can use to assist them with their talks. Your local chamber of commerce may also be helpful with volunteer contacts.

### **What type of volunteers can I focus on recruiting?**

Volunteers that will be assisting with running the event should be recruited in the same way as committee members: with careful consideration of various skills and interests. In addition to general advertising, you may wish to focus special attention on service clubs such as Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis; environmental groups such as Sierra and Audubon Clubs; schools and school groups such as PTA and sports teams; recreational special interest clubs for fishermen, water skiers, horseback riders, and runners; and local churches and youth clubs like scouts, 4-H, FFA, and FHA.

### **What should volunteers bring?**

Heavy-duty work gloves are a must and it is recommended volunteers bring a water bottle with them to drink, especially if it is warm outside. Sunscreen should be applied to prevent overexposure to harmful UV rays, and insect repellent should be applied before going into the field during certain times of the year. Also, we suggest your volunteers have emergency contact(s) information on hand.

Some simple tools can make a volunteer's job safer and easier. A trash poker can be made at home and used to pick up paper and aluminum cans, which can alleviate the need to bend over to pick up trash and reduces the amount of handling. One can be made by partially inserting a nail into the end of a wooden dowel or broomstick handle and then cutting off the head of the nail with wire cutters. Instruct volunteers to be careful when using the poker and always hold the sharp end towards the ground. Also, be careful not to puncture aerosol cans with the poker, as they may explode or emit harmful chemicals. Another useful tool is a pair of long tongs, such as barbecue tongs, which can be used for picking up pieces of broken glass and other objects.

### **What should I tell volunteers to wear?**

Long pants are a must, and a long sleeved shirt is appropriate for extra protection against poison ivy and ticks. Covered shoes are advisable, and high-topped work boots with non-skid soles will help prevent slips and falls. NO TENNIS SHOES! A hat or scarf for sun protection would also be helpful. The coordinator should have several pairs of heavy-duty work gloves available for volunteers who do not bring their own and during hunting season, brightly colored clothing should be worn. If public announcements are used for recruiting volunteers, information concerning proper attire should be included.

### **Coordinate your volunteers**

Coordinating the volunteers will ensure a smoother day and a fun event!

#### **Should I break up the volunteer responsibilities between individuals and groups? What type of administrative tasks can the volunteers assist with?**

Consider making volunteer assignments so that one person doesn't have to do everything the day of the event. You may wish to consider recruiting volunteers for the following jobs:

-Sign In: Designate volunteers to sign participants in and distribute T-shirts.

-Refreshments: Have someone that can keep the refreshment table in order.

-Transportation: Volunteers may be needed to transport other volunteers. Spell out arrangements for crew transportation so volunteers can be moved efficiently from site to site as needed.

-Equipment Distribution: Assign a volunteer to distribute equipment and maps. Supply each crew with plenty of trash bags. See that volunteers wear heavy gloves and are adequately supplied with rakes and shovels to handle compacted trash. To weigh trash onsite, make sure each location is provided with a fish or bathroom scale and instructions on how to weigh the trash. Prepare maps of the specific zone to be cleaned to pass out to volunteers at registration.

-Recycling: Recycling takes extra coordination. Special coded bags can help volunteers sort items as they collect them, or trash can be sorted after the cleanup. Experienced cleanup organizers highly recommend that specific individuals be designated to collect only recyclable materials, while other individuals should collect only litter and debris during the cleanup for proper disposal. Using reusable mesh bags to collect recyclables can help with post-cleanup sorting because sorters can see the contents more easily. Have a place at your event where volunteers are to leave the bags for pickup after they're filled, and make sure it's clear to volunteers where it is located.

-Safety: Make sure you have a first aid kit available and easy access to a phone or emergency personnel for your site.

## **DAY OF EVENT**

The event coordinator has the job of keeping the event running smoothly. To help you keep things on track, have a schedule for the day so you know what should be happening and when, and share the schedule with volunteers.

### **What should a Day Schedule look like?**

Below is a sample schedule of events, followed by explanations:

- ❑ Sign-in
- ❑ Welcome and event overview: Introduce your river
- ❑ Safety talk and instructions
- ❑ Volunteers disperse to cleanup site(s)
- ❑ Return to central location after cleanup
- ❑ Weigh trash
- ❑ Record data and collect data collection sheets
- ❑ Recognize participants

### **Sign-in**

Set up the sign-in site at a location that will catch people as they arrive.

### **Why do volunteers need to sign in?**

Rivers Alive would like to know the number of volunteers participating and the total number of volunteer hours worked. Your sign-in sheet can also be used to contact participants about future river cleanups or other efforts to raise awareness for your local waterway.

### **Is a liability waiver form necessary? If so, where can I locate one?**

Participants should sign a liability waiver. Both the sign-in sheet and the liability waiver are on the Rivers Alive website, or if you have your own liability waiver you can use that instead. Consider retaining copies of waiver according to state and/or local legal guidelines.

### **How should I set up the volunteer sign in?**

Use directional markers, signs, or color-coded flags to help volunteers find the sign-in area. Prepare the sign-in area in such a way that volunteers can collect the necessary materials when they arrive, and leave without mass confusion. Easy-to-read maps of the cleanup site showing the zones, trash bags, gloves, and safety vests should be available for volunteers. Be sure volunteers know where to go when they start cleaning, what equipment will be there, what equipment they may need, and who will supervise them.

### **Welcome and event overview: Introduce your river**

Welcome volunteers and make sure to give an overview of the watershed they are helping to keep clean and the day's events. You can also review the official Rivers Alive tally sheet here so they know how to fill it out and what they need to do in regards to collecting data.

### **What should I review or explain to the participants in regards to the watershed?**

Many people have an interest in the river but don't understand much about river systems. Make people aware of the benefits of clean water and the effect of the cleanup to downstream neighbors, aquatic life and their drinking water. You may wish to provide a map of your local watershed so that people can orient themselves in the watershed and make the visual connection between their home and the river. Maps can be obtained from several sources including Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, Georgia River Poster Series, Georgia Geologic Society or [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com). You can also review the Litter Fact Sheet in the Appendices section and share it with the participants.

### **Safety talk and instructions**

Emphasize safety! To ensure a fun and educational event, keep safety at the top of your priority list. Utilize the safety checklist located in the appendices of this guide to remind yourself and participants of safety information ("Think Safety, p. 21).

### **What should I review or explain to the participants in regards to safety?**

We recommend that you develop an emergency plan for your site and review it with the participants. Go over the cleanup site boundaries, where to go and who to call in case of emergencies, and where the first aid kits are located. Also notify the volunteers what to do with their full trash bags and the site layout. You can divide people up into their teams when reviewing the site instructions and layout if your group is separated into zones.

### **Volunteers disperse to cleanup site(s)**

Make sure everyone knows where to go in case of emergencies and send them off to cleanup the watershed!

### **Return to central location after cleanup**

Upon completing the cleanup of the watershed, return to a centralized location to weigh the trash, gather the recorded data, and recognize the participants.

### **Weigh the trash**

One important measure of success is how much litter and debris was removed, and this is commonly expressed in pounds or tons. Volunteers will need to weigh the trash they collect to determine this.

### **How does our group determine the weight of the trash collected?**

There are two options for determining the weight of the trash collected: a small travel scale or a platform scale.



Small scale: If you are trying to compare the weight of recyclables versus non-recyclables, you may want to count and weigh individual bags using either a fish or bathroom scale. Fish scales that weigh up to 30 pounds are preferred because they are lightweight, compact and usually come in a carrying case. They can be purchased at most sporting good stores. Bathroom scales weigh up to 300 pounds and can also be used to weigh individual bags.

Large Scale: For large cleanups, this may not be practical. You will probably need to count the number of bags on the truck and weigh the entire load on either portable or permanent platform scales. A platform scale is a scale you drive onto with the entire vehicle and the total weight of the trash is determined by subtracting the weight of the vehicle. Most landfills and major recycling centers have platform scales. To get the weight per bag, divide the number of bags into the total weight of the trash. For more information on weighing trash, please see “Estimating Weights and Distances” in the appendix (p. 24).

### **Record data and collect data collection sheets**

Cataloging the type and amount of debris found during the cleanup provides vital information on the source of the trash. Emphasize the importance of data collection.

#### **Why are we collecting data on debris? Is it necessary to record the trash collected?**

Rivers Alive encourages detailed information on what types of trash are being collected. If weight is the most important measure of success, recording what is found is the second most important measure because it can show us what is polluting our waterways.

#### **What type of data should I collect?**

Review the official Rivers Alive tally sheet, available online at <http://www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov>, to see what types of data you need collect. Don't wait until after the event to decide what information you want to gather.

Some things we would like to know include:

- Number of trash bags, dump trucks and/or pounds of trash collected
- Most common and most unusual items collected
- Amount of recyclable material salvaged
- Approximate size of the area cleaned (river/ lake/ wetland/ coastland miles).

#### **Where can I locate a Data Collection Sheet for my cleanup?**

Data collection sheets are posted on the website and hard copy forms will be distributed with your T-shirts in late August. We will also be distributing “Data

Detective” posters to event organizers to help you explain the card as well as pocket guides.

**How do I fill out the card and pick up trash? What is the best way to get accurate data collection?**

To facilitate data collection, we encourage volunteers to work in groups of four or five. Have each team designate a data collector (this is great job for someone who cannot bend and pick up trash or an adult supervising kids). The data collector is then responsible for recording the items picked up by the rest of the team on the data card (the team can just call out the items they pick up as they find them). On the data sheet, the data collector will use tick marks to record the debris items found. At the end of the clean up, the data captains tally tick marks for each item and turns the sheet into the event organizer.

**Do I need to use the litter data cards provided?**

All volunteers participating in Rivers Alive and International Coastal Cleanup events nationwide are using the same data cards so that all the information can be compiled into a comprehensive report that is shared with government leaders in Congress and the EPA.

**Recognize participants**

Make your cleanup as enjoyable as possible for volunteers.

**How can I make my event more enjoyable?**

Consider providing music-- a portable radio or two can lighten the mood and turn the work into an enjoyable event. Locate a convenient shady spot where workers can rest and provide seating and refreshments. Plenty of drinking water is a must. If possible, give your volunteers a memento. Water-related buttons, stickers or T-shirts are readily available, and provide a sense of unity among workers. Rivers Alive provides free T-shirts bearing the official program logo to all groups that register before July 31<sup>st</sup>. Allow time at the end of the day for participants to relax, socialize and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

**Who should I thank in addition to the volunteers?**

Recognize government officials, unions, businesses and other organizations that cooperated with thank-you letters or certificates of appreciation. If you were on private land, be sure to thank the landowner. Including photos of the cleanup site in the thank you letter, especially before-and-after photos, allows them see what they helped to accomplish.

## **FOLLOW UP**

To be established as a Rivers Alive event, the coordinator must follow up the event by submitting the data, accomplishments, and evaluating the efforts put into the event.

### **What do I need to do in order to effectively follow up?**

Here is a checklist to help you successfully follow up, followed by explanations:

- Submit your final tally form
- Publicize accomplishments
- Evaluate your efforts
- Keep the momentum

### **Submit your final data and tally form**

Rivers Alive wants to hear about your successful cleanup!

### **Where do I send my final data and tally form?**

Send us the information from your data forms by filling out the online final tally form at <http://www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov>.

### **Why do I need to send in the data? What is it used for?**

We'll use this information to document the statewide cleanup effort and to attract future sponsors. At the local level, this information may help identify sources of trash on the waterway that can be eliminated. On a statewide level, this data can help identify where education efforts need to be concentrated in order to reduce pollution of our waterways. Globally, the data is submitted to The Ocean Conservancy and incorporated into their annual report, which has been used by EPA, the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and others to identify threats facing the waters of the nation. To learn more about this worldwide effort and to download their annual report, visit [www.oceanconservancy.org](http://www.oceanconservancy.org).

### **Where will the data be posted for coordinators and volunteers to see?**

All data will be posted on the website and in the Rivers Alive Annual Report. This report will be made available by request for all participating groups. Everyone will be eager to see the results of their work, so compile your data after the event as soon as possible.

### **Publicize your accomplishments**

Everyone loves a thank you. The best way to get the word out about the event, future Rivers Alive events, and to thank those that helped make the event a success is to publicize the accomplishments.

### **Where should I publicize and what type of things should I include?**

Contact the local media that helped you advertise before the cleanup and share your results. Be sure to recognize everyone in the community who



made your success possible. Arrange for photos to be taken before, during, and after the event and publish them along with the totals.

### **Can we post anything on the Rivers Alive website for others to see?**

Rivers Alive is happy to publish photos on our website and/or Facebook page. Rivers Alive also has a YouTube account if you have a video of the event and would like it to be shared. Remember though, Rivers Alive has the final decision in regards to posting pictures or videos on the website, Facebook, or YouTube account. To send media items in, email them to [riversalive@gaped.org](mailto:riversalive@gaped.org) or by regular mail to:

Rivers Alive  
GA Adopt-A-Stream  
DNR Environmental Protection Division  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, S.E., Suite 1462 East  
Atlanta, GA 30334

### **Evaluate your efforts**

When the event is completed, it is important to evaluate what you accomplished. It will help you and future planners to capitalize on your successes and avoid similar mistakes.

#### **When should I start evaluating the event and our efforts?**

It is recommended that you choose an evaluation committee in the planning stages to monitor the entire sequence of events, noting what worked well and what went wrong. If you wait until the end of the event to think about evaluation, you may miss opportunities to observe the beginning process of the planning and ways to improve upon it.

#### **What are some methods I can use to evaluate the event?**

Poll your volunteers as they leave, either by providing a questionnaire or by simply having the zone captains ask their crews what they thought of the event. Within a week, get your committee together or send out an email blast asking to make a list of what went well, what needed improvement and what, if anything, failed completely. What problems did they have? What would they do to improve future events? The evaluation committee should compile a final report of what they've learned. With this report, you'll be well on your way toward an even more successful cleanup next year.

### **Keep the momentum**

Consider following up on the interest you have generated in your local waterways. There are many ways to involve citizens in river care throughout the year. Check out the appendices section for a list of ideas for educational activities, helpful links, and other resources.

## **Appendix: Resources**

## Cleanup Event Checklist

(Created for organizers)

*When organizing a large community event, organize a suitable planning group*

- Invite members from local government, civic organizations and clubs, homeowner associations, churches or media to serve on a cleanup planning committee

*Select an appropriate site*

- Depending on site location, get permission from the landowner to conduct a cleanup

*If necessary, prepare a zone map for cleanup crews*

- Determine the size of crew needed to clean each area
- Determine transportation needs to get crews to and from their areas
- Determine what additional litter pickups will be required in areas where sanitation department will not be available
- Determine where crews will need portable sanitary facilities

*Register your event on [RiversAlive.org](http://RiversAlive.org)*

*Line up support and supplies and arrange for disposal and recycling*

- Secure cooperation of business and industry
  - o Ask for donations of trash bags, refreshments, equipment and loans of trucks and buses
  - o Be sure that contributors get adequate credit for their donations in cleanup publicity
- Contact appropriate local government officials for:*
  - o Arrangements for pickups by sanitation trucks
  - o Permission from municipal or county waste disposal facilities to use personal vehicles for dumping if pickups are not being provided by the sanitation department
    - If there is a fee to use the disposal site, ask that it be waived for the cleanup period
  - o Police assistance with traffic if and when necessary
  - o Special pickups for heavy items (furniture and appliances)
  - o Police cooperation with junk car removal; if cars must be tagged before removal, follow required procedure

*Publicize the event and recruit cleanup volunteers:*

- Post signs/posters at local businesses, community centers and grocery stores to recruit volunteers
- List time and locations for cleanups and provide a telephone number so people can call for more information and to volunteer
- Urge residents to clean their own property and/or businesses at the time the community event is taking place

- When possible, assign crews to areas near their homes to eliminate need for transportation and sanitary facilities
- Be sure crews know when and where to assemble, and what equipment will be there
- Choose a “rain date” and define “rain” very precisely
- Ask college students or youth groups to survey outlying or sparsely populated areas to locate items that may need to be trucked out

#### *Coordinate volunteers*

- At sign in, supply each crew member with several large trash bags and make it clear where each crew is to leave filled bags for pickup
- Welcome and event overview: Introduce the watershed and go through the day’s scheduled events
  - o Review safety, location of first aid kits, and who to call in case of emergencies
  - o Review how to fill out the data collection cards and identify data captains
- See that volunteers wear heavy gloves and are adequately supplied with equipment such as rakes and shovels to handle compacted trash
- Return to central location after cleanup for refreshments, to weigh trash, gather data sheets, and recognize participants

#### *Follow-up*

- Submit final tally form to Rivers Alive at <http://www.RiversAlive.Georgia.gov>
- Publicize the success of the event and write thank-you letters to all cooperating government officials, unions, businesses, and organizations
- If possible, reward all volunteers with a button, decal, or other small item to signify they helped in the cleanup
- Evaluate your efforts and keep up the momentum!!

*The information for this checklist was provided courtesy of Keep America Beautiful, 1010 Washington Blvd., Stamford, CT 06901.*

## Think Safety

Your safety and health is very important to us. There are several key points to keep in mind when you are preparing for a Rivers Alive event. During rain events, stream levels can rise rapidly causing bacteria levels to increase. We urge volunteers to avoid cleaning during high flows, thoroughly wash your hands after cleaning, and always work in pairs. During the summer season, poison ivy is rapidly growing, and snakes and bees are out enjoying the warm temperatures, so be conscious of your surroundings.

To ensure a fun and educational trip to your stream, wetland or lake, please keep these simple precautions in mind:

- Always visit a site in pairs so one can go for help if the other is unable to
- Never work if the water is flooding or after a heavy rain - fast moving water is very dangerous
- Avoid steep banks as access points; wear a life jacket if near deep water
- Avoid touching your face and be sure to wash hands before eating
- Know the location of the nearest phone or take a cell phone with you
- Have an emergency plan ready – who will go for help? Does anyone know CPR? Does anyone have allergies?
- Be conscious of wildlife such as snakes, alligators and snapping turtles -leave them alone and they will leave you alone
- Look out for broken glass, poison ivy, ticks, bees, fire ants, and other hazards
- Be aware of the road and surroundings - both driving to the site and while conducting activities
  - Vehicles may not see you getting in and out of your car – bridges are narrow
  - Safely park with enough room to get out and walk to your site
  - If walking under a bridge, watch for objects knocked off the road from overhead.
- Bring a first aid kit

### ***What should be in the first aid kit?***

A good first aid kit should contain the following:

- Telephone numbers of emergency personnel
- First aid manual that outlines diagnosis and treatment procedures
- Disposable gloves
- Bandages for minor cuts
- Gauze pads 3 and 4 inches square for deep wounds with excessive bleeding
- 1 or 2 inch roll of adhesive tape for holding bandages in place, covering blisters, and taping sprained ankles
- Tweezers and needle for opening blisters and removing splinters
- Single-edged razor blade for cutting tape and shaving hairy spots before taping
- 12-inch roll of gauze bandage for large cuts
- Butterfly bandages for closing cuts, triangular bandage for large wounds, splints, or slings, and large compress bandage to hold dressings in place
- 3-inch-wide elastic bandage for sprains or applying pressure to bleeding wounds
- Antibiotic salve
- Hand sanitizer (may also be used to sanitize instruments before and after use)
- Clean water for washing wounds

***What if someone gets hurt?***

In the case of severe injury, the first priority is to stabilize the victim. One person should go for help while another stays with the injured person. The coordinator should be notified as soon as possible, even if it is a minor injury. Each cleanup will have first aid kits, and ideally, each group of volunteers should have someone trained in first aid. To obtain training and certification in first aid, contact your local Red Cross office, which can be found at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

***Can volunteers work alone?***

It is best if volunteers work in groups of three or more. If one person is injured, one can stay with the injured person while the other goes for help.

***What should I do if there is poison ivy?***

There will most likely be poison ivy at your cleanup site. Be aware that poison ivy starts losing its leaves in October in Georgia, making it harder to spot, but it is still possible to have an allergic reaction to the bare vines. Prevention is always the best policy. Gloves, long pants tied at the top of boots, and long sleeved shirts can help prevent exposure. Make sure volunteers are able to identify poison ivy (in addition to poison oak, poison sumac, and stinging nettle if these grow in your area) and advise them to wash all clothing and equipment as soon as they get home. If exposure does occur, flush the area with large amounts of cool water as soon as possible. Poison ivy rashes can be treated with many over-the-counter ointments.

***What should I do if there are ticks?***

If your cleanup site is in a wooded or brushy area, tick exposure is likely. Light-colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks, and pants tied or tucked into boots and commercial tick repellants will help to reduce the probability of bites. DEET, permethrin (Permanone, Duranon, etc) and sulfur powder are good tick repellents, but must be used with care, especially on children. Volunteers should be advised to check themselves carefully for “passengers” when they get home, paying special attention to the scalp and using a mirror to check hard-to-see areas. Clothing should be shaken and washed immediately. If an attached tick is found, it should be grasped firmly with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and pulled out. The area should then be washed with soap and water, checking to make sure that no mouthparts remain embedded in the skin, and apply an antibiotic salve. Ticks can carry disease, so if a rash or flu-like symptoms appear within a month after the bite, medical help should be sought immediately.

***What about large drums or other suspicious-looking containers?***

Don't touch them. While most of the trash encountered can be safely removed by volunteers, there are items that should be avoided. Large drum-type containers that may contain hazardous wastes and other suspicious-looking containers, such as hospital wastes or explosives, should be reported to the event coordinator, who should then inform the proper authorities. Workers should not attempt to lift heavy objects without sufficient help.

***What else should be avoided?***

Volunteers may encounter animals such as dogs, cows, turtles, fish, or goats. The best policy is to leave them alone. Debris piles and vegetated areas may contain snakes, hornets, and wasps and should be approached with caution. Avoid trespassing on private property.

## Important Contact Numbers

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream <a href="https://adoptastream.georgia.gov">https://adoptastream.georgia.gov</a>	404-671-8512
Department of Natural Resources <a href="http://www.gadnr.org">www.gadnr.org</a>	404-656-3500
--Environmental Protection Division <a href="http://www.gaepd.org">http://www.gaepd.org</a>	404-657-5947 or 1-888-EPD-5947
EPD Emergency Response	404-656-4863 or 1-800-241-4113
Air Protection Branch	404-363-7000
Hazardous Waste Management Branch	404-656-7802
Watershed Protection Branch	404-675-6232
Solid Waste Management Program	404-362-2692
EPD's Scrap Tire Program	404-362-2537
Sewage Spill	404-362-2680
Water Resources Management	404-656-3094
EPA Acid Rain Hotline	202-343-9620
--Sustainability Division <a href="http://www.gasustainability.org/">http://www.gasustainability.org/</a>	404-651-5120
--Wildlife Resources Division <a href="http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us">http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us</a>	770-918-6400
GA Soil and Water Conservation Commission <a href="http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/portal/site/SWCC/">http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/portal/site/SWCC/</a>	706-552-4470
Natural Resources Conservation Service <a href="http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/">http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/</a>	706-546-2272
Department of Community Affairs <a href="http://www.dca.state.ga.us">http://www.dca.state.ga.us</a>	404-679-4840
Keep Georgia Beautiful <a href="http://www.KeepGeorgiaBeautiful.org">http://www.KeepGeorgiaBeautiful.org</a>	404-679-4910
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Division <a href="http://www.usace.army.mil/environment/Pages/home.aspx">http://www.usace.army.mil/environment/Pages/home.aspx</a>	202-528-4285

## Estimating Weights and Distances

The following are simple guidelines and tips to help you record “Distance Cleaned” and “Estimated Weight Collected”.

### ***Estimating Distance Cleaned***

Record the Distance Cleaned in miles

- Estimate the longest linear length that volunteers clean. Do not use area measurement such as square feet, square miles, or acres.
- Use the following method to convert area measurements to linear distance: Number of Square feet cleaned divided by 10 ft divided by 5280 ft = linear miles cleaned

$$\text{Linear Miles Cleaned} = \frac{\text{Number of Sq Ft}/10\text{Ft}}{5280\text{FT}}$$

Example: Volunteer reports cleaning 1 acre

1 acre = 43,560 sq ft

43,560/10/ 5280 = .825 Linear Miles Cleaned

### ***Estimating Weight Collected***

To record the “Total Estimated Weight Collected” in pounds, assume 1 full trash bag = 15 lbs.

*Taken from the “Pocket Guide to Marine Debris” produced by The Ocean Conservancy, 2001*



## What to Recycle

### How to Prepare it

### Where to Recycle it

- ❑ **Glass:** Bottles, jars, and jugs. Remove tops and rinse out. Separate by color (green, brown, and clear). Labels do not need to be removed.
- ❑ **Bi-metals:** “Tin and steel” food cans in all sizes should be rinsed out for return. Labels do not have to be removed.
- ❑ **Papers:** Recycle by grade. Separate into computer, office file stock, newsprint, and corrugated cardboard.
- ❑ **Plastics:** Containers need to be cleaned and flattened. Tops have to be removed, but labels do not. There are two common types of recyclable plastic.
  1. PETE (polyethylene terephthalate) - soda and other soft plastic bottles
  2. HDPE (high-density polyethylene) - plastic milk, water, juice, and some other hard plastic bottles
- ❑ **Metals:** Aluminum cans, radiators, appliances, and scrap metals (iron, aluminum, brass, copper, zinc, lead, stainless steel). Higher prices are normally paid for these materials when returned clean.
- ❑ **Auto Batteries:** Batteries are a hazardous waste and are illegal to landfill in most areas. Take old batteries to a buy-back center, service center, or auto parts retailer. Do not ever throw batteries away!
- ❑ **Used oil:** Used motor oil should be taken to a local service station or oil collection center. Do not contaminate the oil with any other substances.

Recyclables can be returned to:

- ❑ Buy-back centers, which pay current prices for materials
- ❑ Drop-off or convenience centers, where you can drop off your recyclables alongside regular solid waste
- ❑ Charitable organizations, which collect them for fundraisers
- ❑ Local recycling centers, to locate your nearest recycling centers, visit <http://earth911.org/>

## Litter Fact Sheet

### HOW LONG 'TIL IT'S GONE?

The time it takes for debris to decompose in the environment

Glass bottle	1 million years
Monofilament fishing line	600 years
Plastic beverage bottles	450 years
Disposable diapers	450 years
Aluminum can	80-200 years
Foamed plastic buoy	80 years
Rubber boot sole	50-80 years
Foamed plastic cup	50 years
Tin can	50 years
Leather	50 years
Nylon fabric	30-40 years
Plastic film canister	20-30 years
Plastic bag	10-20 years
Cigarette filter	1-5 years
Wool sock	1-5 years
Plywood	1-3 years
Waxed milk carton	3 months
Apple core	2 months
Newspaper	6 weeks
Orange or banana peel	2-5 weeks
Paper towel	2-4 weeks

*Sources: US National Park Service; Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL and "Garbage In, Garbage Out," Audubon magazine, Sept/Oct 199*

## **Enhance your Cleanup with Education!**

To help you educate your participants about nonpoint source pollution, Rivers Alive has compiled a list of activities you can use to reach different audiences. Below are ideas for water quality education activities and displays that can be done in conjunction with or as a follow up to a Rivers Alive event.

### **Activities and Information for School and Scout Groups**

#### **Hands-On Activity Stations**

Activities from the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream's Educator Guide  
[http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org/Manuals\\_etc/Teacher/Guide.pdf](http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org/Manuals_etc/Teacher/Guide.pdf)

Activities from the USA EPA: Test Your Water Smarts  
Take this quiz to test your water smarts, then give the quiz to family and friends to test their knowledge on water quality

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/nationswaters/testyoursmart.pdf>

Nonpoint Source Kids Page

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/kids/>

Turning the Tide on Trash: Marine Debris Curriculum

[http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/marine\\_contents.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/marine_contents.cfm)

#### **Activities from The Water Sourcebook**

4 Suggested Activities:

A Salt Water-y World activity

N, B, & T: Pollutants Three

Clean Up Activity

Stop That Sediment

[http://water.epa.gov/learn/kids/drinkingwater/wsb\\_index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/learn/kids/drinkingwater/wsb_index.cfm)

Play Water Jeopardy

Using this activity designed by the U.S. Geological Survey, students will review what they have learned about hydrology and its importance to all ecosystems.

[http://www.nps.gov/wica/forteachers/upload/Hydrology-Water\\_Jeopardy.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/wica/forteachers/upload/Hydrology-Water_Jeopardy.pdf)

#### **Use Enviroscape Models**

Non-point Source Pollution Enviroscape models allow learners to see pollution and runoff.

<http://www.envirosapes.com/>

These may be borrowed from the UGA Cooperative Extension Service 4-H District Offices and Project WET. When you visit the website, click on the map for the counties served by each district.

<http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/statewide.cfm>

## **Water Festivals**

### **Making Waves: How to Put on a Water Festival**

Available from The Groundwater Foundation, *Making Waves* will help you coordinate a water festival for your entire community.

<http://www.groundwater.org/kids/events.html> or call 1-800-858-4844

### **Making More Waves: Ideas from Across the United States and Canada for Organizing Your Festival**

Available from The Groundwater Foundation, *Making More Waves* highlights the best and brightest ideas from a variety of festivals. Learn successful fundraising techniques, how to recognize donors, and how to keep volunteers coming.

<http://www.groundwater.org/kids/events.html> or call 1-800-858-4844

### **Water Festival Basics: WORKSHOP**

Water festival events have been proven to have a positive impact on children's awareness, knowledge, and behavior in protecting water resources. This workshop will provide educators with the tools and skills needed to organize and implement a water festival in their school, community, or region.

[http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/events\\_festivals.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/events_festivals.htm)

### **Uncover the secrets of water at Winning Water: The Children's Water Festival**

The purpose of the festival is to educate selected fourth grade students about ground, drinking, surface water (watersheds) and water quality in a fun hands-on atmosphere

<http://www.keepgeorgiabeautiful.org/water.asp>

## **Activities and Information for the General Public**

### **Water Facts**

#### **Water Trivia Facts**

[http://www.epa.gov/safewater/kids/water\\_trivia\\_facts.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/kids/water_trivia_facts.html)

#### **Water Facts of Life**

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/kids/waterfactsoflife.html>

### **Handouts from US EPA**

#### **Streams in the City**

Facts and information on water in an urban area

[http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/nps\\_edu/pdf/urban.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/nps_edu/pdf/urban.pdf)

#### **Stop Pointless Personal Pollution**

Information on how everyday chores can harm the streams and lakes

[http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/nps\\_edu/pdf/stop.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/nps_edu/pdf/stop.pdf)

## Nonpoint Source Pointers Fact Sheets

Fact sheets on agricultural and urban runoff

[http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/outreach/facts\\_index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/outreach/facts_index.cfm)

## **Water Resources Toolkit provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs**

Georgia's 14 River Basins Map

<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/watertoolkit/Documents/WatershedPlanningTools/MapofGeorgias14RiverBasins.pdf>

Georgia's 52 Large Watersheds Map

<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/watertoolkit/Documents/WatershedPlanningTools/MapofGeorgias52LargeWatersheds.pdf>

Power Point Presentations

--You're the Solution to Water Pollution Power Point

<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/watertoolkit/Documents/PublicationEducationInvolvement/YouretheSolutiontoWaterPollution.ppt>

--Water, Our Planet's Most Precious Resource Power Point

<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/watertoolkit/Documents/PublicationEducationInvolvement/WaterOurPlanetsMostPreciousResource.ppt>

--Narrative

<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/watertoolkit/Documents/PublicationEducationInvolvement/WaterOurPlanetsMostPreciousResource.doc>

## **Invite an Environmental Education Organization**

To locate a directory of Georgia Environmental Education Providers and other environmental education material, visit Environmental Education in Georgia

<http://www.eeingorgia.org>

## **Adopt-A-Stream Program**

Invite a coordinator from the Adopt-A-Stream program, Rivers Alive's parent program, to talk about nonpoint source pollution and their volunteer water-monitoring program. Georgia Adopt-A-Stream encourages individuals and communities to monitor and/or improve sections of streams, wetlands, lakes or estuaries. Manuals, training, and technical support are provided through Georgia EPD and more than 50 established local Adopt-A-Stream organizers. You can also request copies of the *You're the Solution to Water Pollution* brochure and poster to distribute

<http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org>

## Further Education Opportunities for After Your Event

### School and Scout Groups

Training for Teachers and Youth Organization Leaders:

Georgia Project WET –  
Water Education for Teachers  
<https://projectwet.georgia.gov>

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream,  
Teachers Corner  
<http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org>

### General Public

Training for Citizens:

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, Getting Started  
<https://adoptastream.georgia.gov/getting-started>

#### Rain Gardens Workshops with the Clean Water Campaign

A rain garden receives stormwater runoff water from roofs or other hard surfaces such as driveways. The rain garden holds the water on the landscape so that it can soak into the ground instead of flowing into a street and down a storm drain.

<http://www.cleanwatercampaign.com>

## Form A Partnership!

Contact an Environmental Organization Near You

A directory of **Georgia Environmental Education Providers** can be found at [EEinGeorgia.org](http://EEinGeorgia.org), whose goal is to build statewide capacity for environmental education by providing EE lesson plans based on Georgia's curriculum standards, a searchable directory of Georgia's EE organizations and the resources they offer, a statewide calendar of EE events, EE news, and easy-to-access facts about Georgia's environment.

<http://eeingeorgia.org/>