

Kayak/Canoe River Clean Up Guide

Cleaning a river by canoe or kayak is one of the easiest ways to get individuals up close and personal to the river and have a blast taking care of your local resources. Rivers Alive encourages boat cleanup events and wants to make sure your clean-up is effective, safe and fun. We have compiled tips and information to help organize your river cleanup event. Make sure you review the Rivers Alive Organizer Guide before planning your event. The guide covers everything necessary to make sure your event is a success including how to register your clean up, disposal, publicity and more. It can be found on the Rivers Alive website under Organizers. You will also find waivers and other useful information.

1. Proper equipment including boats, PFD, safety equipment, shoes, pickers and clothes and length of and how much time on the river
2. Large item removal paddling and other concerns [have a backup plan for tires and large items]
3. The tire dilemma [hence the tire disposal issue]
4. Safety including "critters" on shoreline
5. Lead and sweep
6. Disposal after the event
7. Giving information to participants

1. Once you determine you have a stretch of river that would benefit from some up close and personal cleaning, paddling and picking might be the best way to get the job done. Use the following considerations before you set up the event.

If you are going to clean a river already used for recreation paddling it makes access much easier. Generally there are already landings and recognized put-in's for paddlers. The biggest concern is length. Most cleanups should not last longer than 4 hours, so going beyond 5 miles is not recommended. In some rivers even 5 miles may be too long if the river has a large volume of trash or is full of tires. Recommend you paddle the area prior to the event to make sure you have clear passage, and will have enough time and resources for the job.

If this is a river not used for public recreational paddling, consider the following:

ACCESS: is there a safe place to get in the river, paddle then get out with the trash? Some rivers and stream banks are extremely steep, or inaccessible because of rocks, roads, culverts or private property.

The general rule of navigation, if you can't float the boat you most likely should not attempt to clean it by kayak/canoe. Some areas are good candidates but run through private property. Respect private property. You need to get permission before you attempt to paddle on someone's private river. Property rights vary but in GA the owner of the bank owns to the middle of the river and yes you will be trespassing if you step out of your boat, even if it is to get a piece of trash.

Check with the owner, not only may they give you access they may help with a parking area or an easier entrance to the water. They may even help with trash disposal.

Once you have determined the river can be paddled and you have a place to get in and out, you need equipment and support. If the river is paddled by the general public there most likely is an outfitter who rents boats and runs shuttles. Checking with your local canoe clubs (Georgia Canoe Association, Atlanta Area Paddlers, Georgia River Network, Riverkeeper, river groups, Google) will help you find support. These groups may want to help your efforts and provide equipment so it is important to get as many groups involved as possible.

If you can find a local outfitter, most care deeply about the river and want to help protect it and keep it clean. All may not offer free boats, shuttles and even help with disposal but most will discount services for cleanups. They may be more willing to rent/lend canoes than single boats. Canoes are great trash barges and can hold 2 people so this may be the way to go. Try and schedule so your event so it is not conflicting with the outfitters business like middle of the day Saturdays during the summer. If you work with them and their schedule you will find them much more willing to help. Remember the outfitter is in business to make money, so any help with shuttle tips and "passing the hat" around is greatly appreciated and will make a willing partner for future events.

If the people helping you have their own boats it solves a lot of problems. You can use an outfitter for shuttle service, it greatly improves event set up speed and solves many logistical issues.

If there is no outfitter, you may be able to borrow boats from local schools, camps, river groups and even local county outdoor programs. Look for a mix of canoes and single kayaks. This will give you trash barge canoes for all the trash and larger items and small boats to get into tight places for trash along the riverbanks.

If you do not have an outfitter shuttle, you must provide your own. This is sometimes the most difficult part. Boats must be taken and left at put-in, riders (non-vehicle drivers) stay with boats, drivers all drive to take out. As few as possible vehicles return to put-in with as many drivers crammed in as possible. The drivers who returned to put-in will need a ride back to vehicles after event.

All boating participants should have the following: boat single or tandem, Personal Flotation Device (LIFE VEST) to be worn at ALL TIMES, proper clothing and shoes along with collection bag and basket which are outlined below.

BOATS: If you are taking new boaters on the river, some for the first time you want to make sure everyone is safe. Many outfitters use "sit on top" kayaks. They are extremely stable, easy to remount if

you swim and can hold trash. These are excellent for trash clean ups, and good for new paddlers. You should not attempt to have a paddle clean up with all inexperienced paddlers. You need experienced boaters for safety. If you want to clean up tires, large items and even large amounts of trash, having canoes is a must. It is almost impossible to balance a tire on a kayak for any distance especially if any maneuvering is involved.

PFD: All participants must sign a waiver. You are taking people on a river in a boat to pick up potentially heavy, sharp and especially dirty items. All participants must wear the life vest (PFD) at all times.

CLOTHING/SHOES: If you have never been paddling, you don't know what to expect or wear. Assume your participants have not been paddling. Nylon quick drying clothes and shoes that will not come off in the water is important. Gloves usually get in the way and are difficult to use, leave them. Tell your participants to bring an extra set of clothes for the trip home. Assume they will get wet and dirty. Taking a group of rookie paddlers down a river in winter is not advisable unless you make sure you have plenty of warm clothes changes for swims. NO FLIP FLOPS. Besides the fact they do not protect your feet, they are easily lost.....you will be picking them up as trash on any river used for recreation. Remind people no cell phones and cameras that are not waterproof....bring extra dry bags for the rookie paddler's stuff.

2. LARGE ITEMS:

You need to make a policy statement about large/heavy/dangerous items before the trip begins in the safety briefing. There is great desire to get large items like sunk boats off a river, but only if everyone is safe. You also need to determine if the item will take too much time. If it takes you 3 hours to break up an item for removal, and you still need to paddle 4 miles to the take out you might have an issue. I usually decide an "end" time, like 10:00 start to 2:00 everyone should be off the river. If you have time to safely work the item, great, if it will take too long, or become a navigation hazard if you start to remove it and not finish, leave it for another time.

3. TIRES: Because individuals are "charged" to dispose of tires, they have become a disposal issue. They have also been used as ecological habitat for many species before it was determined to be environmentally unacceptable. Most rivers that have public access have tires. You need to determine if they should be removed. If you can get the tire with little effort, requires little excavation or soil/stream bank disturbance please remove it. If you need a shovel and lots of time to remove it, leave it. The soil disturbance is much more harmful to the waterway than the tire. Tires cannot be put in a general garbage dumpster, it is illegal for the landfill. They must be taken to a tire recycler or picked up by the county/city for recycling.

4. SAFETY, CRITTERS AND OTHER HAZARDS:

Safety should be a priority so it is important to make sure everyone follows some basic safety rules. All participants must sign a waiver and wear a PFD at all times. There should be a short safety briefing before the event. American Canoe Association www.aca.com has website paddling safety points, trip preparation and planning, cold water issues and even guides for rescue. They also offer trip insurance for groups and events. To see the Top 10 Safety Tips follow the link below.

https://aca.site-ym.com/?page=Top_10

Make sure someone has a cell phone so emergency services can be called if necessary. . Have a head count before you leave, make sure everyone knows the take out, buddy system and take the waivers with emergency information WITH YOU on the river. The information does no good if it is in your car while you need it on the river. Make a firm head count before you leave and make sure everyone gets out of the river at the end.

FIRST AID: Team Leader should have a first aid kit. Besides band aids and antiseptic for minor cuts and scrapes preparing for stings is also a good idea. Make sure to ask participants if they are allergic to bee stings and if they are prepared with the proper antidote. Any major injuries should be treated by professionals by calling 911.

The river is home to many creatures, and they don't understand you are trying to make their home more beautiful. Some of them have even made the trash their home so you need to be careful when picking up trash in and along the river. If you have access to garbage pickers, they are excellent tools on the river to reach and retrieve trash. To guard against pickers becoming trash when dropped (and they will be) a small piece of Styrofoam noodle duct taped around the picker will make sure they float. Besides grabbing the trash a picker gives you the opportunity to touch the trash with something besides your hands. Snakes, bees, spiders, frogs and other creatures might be under or around anything you find so be careful.

We use plastic laundry baskets bungee corded to our boats to hold the trash. It gives kayakers a place to put cans, bottles, balls and other small pieces until you can bag and dispose or transfer to a canoe so you can retrieve more. It also potentially keeps creatures out of the cockpit of the kayak.

Mesh bags (potato bags) are also excellent for river cleanups. Because they don't hold water they help lighten the load and can be recycled for reuse if you are careful. We order 200 at a time to save money and share with other groups. Suppliers:

Paddle Sport Warehouse www.paddlesportwarehouse.com.

Uline products :

http://www.uline.com/BL_5588/Mesh-Bags?pricode=WQ887&qclid=CO3L_PD2ubECFQPznAodbiMAqA

5. LEAD AND SWEEP: You need a have a complete safety briefing before anyone get into the water. A Kayak/Canoe safety briefing list is included in this packet. You want to make sure everyone is safe, and has fun. One of the most important safety tips for cleanups is having a lead boat and a sweep that know the river. All other boaters are in the middle, the group stays together. If you have a lot of experienced boaters you can take more inexperienced people. Have a head count before you leave, make sure everyone knows the take out.

6. DISPOSAL: Once you get the trash to the take out you need to figure out how to dispose of the trash from your haul. You need to determine this before you start the cleanup, have a plan. Large events with many people may need dumpsters, smaller event might just require someone's pick up. If you can partner with your local city and county workers, Clean and Beautiful affiliates or park officials it makes getting trash support much easier.

A few days before the event, it is a great idea to check with all your partners and participants to make sure all is in place and people know when and where to show up. Below is an example of an email sent out to participants before a cleanup event on the Chattahoochee River. Your communications should be specific to your event. If a participant is borrowing equipment (boat) or expected to bring essential items to the events make sure you have cell phone numbers so you can contact them if you have issues the day of the event.

Make sure you post your event on the Rivers Alive website. Because kayak clean ups require boats and other equipment you might want to make it a private event to control the participation and not have people just "show up" expecting boats and gear. Make sure you give your results after the event to Rivers Alive and post those important event photos!

EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION EMAIL:

Thank you for volunteering for the June 2nd Clean the Race Course Paddle Cleanup! Please review the details below.

WHERE TO MEET AND WHAT TIME:

We will be meeting at Garrard Landing at 8:30am Saturday, June 2nd. Please be prompt!

The address is: **8100 Holcomb Bridge Road, Alpharetta, GA.** The entrance is the same as the John's Creek Environmental Campus.

Shuttling: Once we meet at Garrard Landing, we will unload all boats and equipment. Drivers (only drivers) will take their cars to Azalea Drive (the takeout) and park their cars. I'll have driving directions for you. (Passengers will remain at Garrard Landing with the boats.) We will then carpool back to Garrard Landing - using vehicles that can accommodate the most people.

Schedule for the day: Our estimated time to start paddling is approx 9:30am. Folks, this is about 5 miles and typically a 2-3 hour paddle trip. But when you factor in cleaning, well, then it quickly turns in to a

much longer day. I will be keeping track of the time and if you hear a whip crack overhead... just know we gotta step up the pace. But I hope to be off the river by 2pm.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- This is a service project to pickup trash out of the river. **Wear clothes that you don't mind getting very dirty and wet.** And while I shouldn't have to say this, I will -- your boat will get very dirty as well.
You might want to bring clean clothes and shoes to change into for your journey home.

WHAT TO BRING:

- **You are responsible for your own boating equipment... canoe/kayak, paddles, PFD.** If you need to rent your equipment, please [Click here](#) for a list of other outfitters.
- **Laundry basket:** Yes a plastic laundry basket bungeed to your boat makes a great place to hold your accumulated trash
- **Personal Floatation Device:** Please make sure you have a Personal Floatation Device (PFD). PFDs are required and must be worn on the trip.
- **Drinks/Snacks/Lunch.** Please make sure you have plenty of fluids to drink. It may be a hot day. Also, plan to bring lunch or snacks (depending on duration and time of day).
- **Sunscreen/Hat:** It's easy to forget while you're paddling on the cool water that you can still be sunburned. So be prepared with clothing or sunscreen. Hats and or sunglasses on safety straps are recommended.
- **Dry Clothes:** Plan on getting wet! Kayaking/canoeing is a water sport - so it's likely that you might get wet or at least splashed. Plan to have a towel and/or dry clothing in your car waiting for you at the end of the trip.
- **Cameras and cell phones.** Please be sure they are in waterproof bags/containers. Both are expensive so don't trust their safety to an inexpensive sandwich bag.
- **Severe Weather:** The event will be cancelled if there is a threat of severe thunderstorms/lightening OR if the river is running high due to rain or a release. If weather is not looking good, **CHECK YOUR EMAIL BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE SAT MORNING. I will email you all by 7:30am if we cancel.** If you don't hear from me, let's go!