

Group Coordinator's Manual



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Sponsored By:

The Conservation Foundation

Waste Management, Inc.

DuPage County Stormwater Management Division

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

In Partnership with:

American Rivers

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River Sweep

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Group Coordinators and Volunteers,

Three decades of pollution-control efforts have proven that ensuring clean water is not as simple as regulating pipes that empty into our nation's water. These pipes are only part of the problem. We now realize that a large share of water pollution -- by some estimates as much as 70 percent -- arises from sources that are much harder to regulate and control. This unregulated pollution comes from virtually everywhere. It comes from contaminated runoff from cities, towns, and farms; construction, forestry, and mining activities; septic tanks which drain into groundwater; and rainwater that washes contaminants out of the air.

Among the various kinds of water pollution, the most visual forms are litter and debris. While some natural debris (leaves and yard brush) is good for fish and wildlife habitat, man-made litter and unwanted debris can be costly. Litter can endanger fish and wildlife, and detract from the scenic beauty of our waterways. Excessive debris, such as floating logs and boards, can damage boats and injure persons involved in water recreation activities. Litter and debris can also clog municipal and industrial water intakes, and are often a source of other water pollutants such as toxic chemicals and bacteria.

The reduction of litter and unwanted debris requires that all of us work together. Proper waste handling, including reuse and recycling, environmentally sound management practices on farms and forests, and volunteer cleanup activities, can all help keep unwanted materials from entering waterways. Thank you for helping clean-up DuPage County's waterways during River Sweep. Your participation in is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sue George, Watershed Assistant

HOW TO ORGANIZE A RIVER CLEANUP

To have a successful cleanup, you need to organize carefully. Here is an outline of steps to help you achieve your goals. Remember we are partners in this effort and will be there every step of the way to assist you with organizing your own cleanup. We will all be proud of the efforts to improve the environment. Have fun, and most of all, be careful.

- 1) Recruit your volunteers early, get a sign up sheet started and create fliers promoting event and directing volunteers to www.theconservationfoundation.org website (search DuPage River Sweep). Send recruits copies of the *Pre-Sweep Information Sheet* (page 6) and the *Volunteer Safety Guidelines* (page 7 & 8) provided in this manual.
- 2) A Community Liaison will be assigned to you and will be overseeing multiple groups and a few individual volunteers in an assigned community the day of the Sweep. You can choose an area to clean or your Community Liaison can assign an area. They can also help you decide where to have your group gather, time to begin your cleanup and watercraft launch locations.
- 3) Schedule a time prior to the day of the Sweep to get supplies (trash bags, work gloves, waiver cards - to come via email, snacks, grabbers or pokers from your Community Liaison). If you are working in an area without a Liaison, plan on getting your supplies from The Conservation Foundation's (TCF) Watershed Assistant. All groups (2 or more persons) as well as individual volunteers who are not part of a group need to be registered preferably a minimum of two weeks prior to event. If you have a group of 10 or more a month notice is requested if a guarantee of Sweep supplies from TCF is needed.
- 4) Waiver cards must be completed and returned by all participants prior to cleaning the river. Group Coordinators are to collect signed cards from their volunteers and to provide the completed cards to the Community Liaison prior to or on the day of the Sweep, but in advance of beginning cleanup. Individual volunteers may mail, fax or email signed waiver cards to TCF's Watershed Assistant prior to the day of the Sweep. Please remind volunteers to write the name of the group they are with on the cards. Parents must sign for volunteers under 18 years of age.
- 5) Check your Site - Make sure your area is safe for the type and age range of group you will be taking. Look for problem areas or objects too large for lifting. Watch for steep, slippery banks and/or deep water. Make some safety notes on the *Safety Worksheet* provided in this manual (page 9). You will be responsible for the safety of volunteers in your group as well as your individual safety. Please have proper supervision for youths. NOTE: The spring is a time of heavy rains. Swift water should not be entered by any volunteer. Volunteers are welcome to reschedule due to weather conditions.
- 6) Assemble the necessary safety equipment and cleaning tools as listed on the page titled *Provision and Materials - Group Coordinator* (page 5).
- 7) If necessary, obtain permission from any private landowners to access non-public areas. The Watershed Assistant can provide a Property Access Agreement Form for your review.
- 8) If anyone in your group has access to a canoe/kayak, they can be helpful to get objects along the water's edge or out of a wading area. Be sure to bring the proper number of personal flotation devices if you plan to canoe/kayak and be aware of rapidly moving water. Canoeing after a rain event is not recommended. Removing log jams is not recommended as well. Training in watercraft

use is a requirement and may be completed by such organizations as Prairie State Canoeists (see website).

- 9) Call your volunteers the day before the Sweep; verify travel and eating arrangement, time and place to meet. Also establish a rain date with your Community Liaison and communicate that to volunteers.
- 10) On the day of the River Sweep, meet with your Community Liaison to verify your plan of action (areas to sweep, dumpsters for debris, hauling of debris, supply pickup/drop off, facilities, etc).
- 11) Just prior to cleaning gather your group together for a brief safety meeting using the *Safety Worksheet* (page 9). This simple step can avoid serious injuries.
- 12) Report back to your Community Liaison regarding location of filled garbage bags and any objects you were unable to remove, miles covered, interesting finds and number of garbage bags filled.

And don't forget your camera. Before and after shots are always fun! This is always a memory making event.

PROVISIONS AND MATERIALS -
THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

The Conservation Foundation will provide:

- An assigned Community Liaison to oversee needs on the day of the Sweep.
- Technical assistance and guidance to help you carry out your cleanup project, upon request.
- Offer advice on the best locations where your group can contribute to the improvement of streams in DuPage County.
- Large, heavy-duty trash bags, gloves, and snacks for your cleanup. We also have some trash pokers and reachers available.
- The locations of drop-off points for trash collected.
- Arrangements for the collection and disposal of the trash collected.
- Notification of the appropriate governmental agencies and jurisdiction where your cleanup is taking place.

Call (630) 428-4500, ext. 22
for more information.

PROVISIONS AND MATERIALS - GROUP COORDINATOR

The Group Coordinator is expected to provide the following prior to the event:

- Completed waiver cards from all participants prior to cleaning the river. Waiver cards can be mailed to The Conservation Foundation, 10S404 Knoch Knolls Road, Naperville, IL 60565 OR returned to your Community Liaison on the day of the Sweep. Be sure to include the name of the group on the waiver card.
- Signed parental consent form for volunteers under 18 years of age (for your files).
- Permission from private and public landowners for access.
- Coordinate the training and use of canoes/kayaks, if you expect to float your section of the river.
- All transportation arrangements for your volunteers.
- Refreshments, lunch or picnic provisions you may plan for your own group.

The Group Coordinator is expected to provide the following on the day of the event:

- A first-aid kit that contains the following:
 - ___ Telephone numbers of emergency personnel such as the police and ambulance service
 - ___ First aid manual which outlines diagnosis and treatment procedures
 - ___ Bandages for minor cuts
 - ___ Antiseptic cleaner
 - ___ 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
 - ___ Needle for opening blisters and removing splinters.
 - ___ Single edged razor blade for cutting tape to size and shaving hair before taping
 - ___ 12-inch roll of gauze bandage for large cuts
 - ___ Butterfly bandages for closing cuts
 - ___ Triangular bandage for large wounds
 - ___ Large compress bandage to hold dressings in place
 - ___ 3-inch wide elastic bandage for sprains and applying pressure to bleeding wounds
- Adequate supervision for youth groups (suggested 1 adult per 8 children).
- Extra pairs of work gloves for those who forgot theirs or didn't have any. (Your Community Liaison may have extra pairs.)
- Extra cleaning tools as listed on the *Pre-Sweep Information Sheet* provided in this manual (page 6).
- Information to your Community Liaison regarding location of filled garbage bags and any objects you were unable to remove, miles covered, name of stream/tributary covered, interesting finds and number of garbage bags filled.

PRE-SWEEP INFORMATION SHEET

What Should I Wear?

- High-top work boots with non-skid soles. No tennis shoes!
(Your footwear will get wet and muddy so don't wear expensive Nikes!)
- Hat (sun protection) or scarf
- Long pants with a long-sleeve shirt
- Heavy-duty work gloves
- Insect repellent (Permanone and sulfur powder are good tick repellents)
- Sunscreen
- Life jacket and tow rope if planning on floating a canoe/kayak

What Should I Bring?

Each group of volunteers must provide their own cleaning tools. Here are some ideas of what to bring. Having all these tools available will make cleaning safer and easier.

- Extra trash pokers: This can alleviate excessive bending of the back, and reduce the amount of contact with trash. Be careful when using a poker; always hold the sharp end towards the ground. Also, be careful not to puncture aerosol cans with the poker, they may explode or emit contents that may be harmful.

Tip: Make a trash poker by:

- 1) Drilling a hole into the end of a wooden dowel or broomstick handle
- 2) Partially insert a nail into the hole
- 3) Cutting off the head of the nail

- Pair of long tongs (BBQ style) for picking up glass and other objects.
- Rake
- Shovel

VOLUNTEER SAFETY GUIDELINES

Common Sense as a Safety Tool

For most of us cleaning trash out of the river puts us in unfamiliar surroundings. In addition it is a task requiring focus. Therefore, it is easy to forget precautions that may seem painfully simplistic but when we are reminded can help avoid injury. The following are some simple reminders to help avoid injury.

- Watch the water – Do not canoe/kayak or wade after a rain event.
- Don't walk backwards, as when taking a photograph.
- Don't stand up too fast, and look before you stand up. It is easy to hit your head or poke your eye on a low branch.
- Watch where you walk to avoid trips and falls over tree roots, railroad tracks or large rocks. These trips and falls can become more frequent when you are tired. Take rests when you are fatigued.
- Be alert when near roads or bike paths. Drivers and bike riders most likely won't be expecting you to be there.
- Don't overfill garbage bags or other containers.
- Don't pick up glass with bare hands. Use the work gloves provided or a pair of tongs.
- Watch the weather and be aware of shelters in the area.
- Bring extra water and snacks.

Will There Be Poison Ivy?

You may encounter poison ivy, however, to help prevent exposure wear gloves and long-sleeve shirts and tie your long pants at the top of your work boots. The oil within poison ivy (urushiol) is in all parts of the plant and persists after exposure. Thorough washing with soap and water is recommended as soon as possible after exposure. Clothes that have been exposed should be washed separately from other laundry and shoes and boots washed off. Prevention is the best policy. Remember "Leaves of Three, Let it Be," and avoid touching any vines attached to tree trunks.

Can Volunteers Work Alone?

It is best to use the buddy system while cleaning up the river. Work with at least two others. This way if one person is injured, one can stay with the injured person while the other one goes for help.

What If Somebody Gets Hurt?

As the Group Coordinator you should determine an emergency plan and review it with your group prior to the beginning of work. Ideally, each group of volunteers should have someone trained in first aid. (Perhaps you would like to volunteer for this responsibility and take a course in first aid offered by the American Red Cross.) In general, the procedure depends on the severity of the injury. In the case of a severe injury, the first thing is to stabilize the victim. One person should go for help while the other stays with the injured person. The coordinator should be notified as soon as possible and should always have a first aid kit available.

What To Avoid!

Most of the trash encountered is easily cleaned up safely, but there are items to be avoided. Some materials should be avoided for obvious health reasons (hospital wastes, needles, personal hygiene items, contraceptives, dead animals).

Workers should not attempt to lift heavy objects without sufficient help. If you find a large item that requires chain saws or other heavy machinery to remove such as a complicated log jam or an abandoned car, contact your Community Liaison. They will contact the appropriate county or local staff member. **Do not attempt to remove these large items yourself.**

Volunteers may encounter wild animals (raccoons, squirrels) or stray domestic animals (dogs, cats). The best policy is to leave them alone. Volunteers should be alert for hornets, and wasps in debris piles and vegetated areas. Avoid trespassing on private property.

What About Large Drums or Other Suspicious Looking Containers?

Volunteers should not disturb any large drum-type containers. They may contain hazardous wastes or explosives. If one is encountered, volunteers should note where it is and inform the Group Coordinator and Community Liaison of its location.

Sanitary Issues

The DuPage River is much cleaner than it used to be, but it is still an open river and therefore can have germs that are purposely filtered out of our tap water. Therefore, it is important to protect open wounds from the river water by wearing rubber gloves and a good bandage. Also when you've finished cleaning trash out of the rivers be sure to wash your hands or shower thoroughly, especially before eating.

SAFETY WORKSHEET

Site Notes:

Trash location:

Safety Meeting:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Persons Present:

Safety Meeting Agenda:

- Review Site Notes from above.

- Review *Volunteer Safety Guidelines* on pages 6 and 7

- Review emergency plan in case of injury or other emergency.

Emergency Phone Number: _____