



Operation H₂O DIY Project

Civic Circle Area: Volunteer

The impact of COVID-19 continues to change our daily lives and routines, but volunteering and civic engagement are just as important as ever. This project can be modified to adhere to social distancing guidelines set by local and national authorities, to do virtually or to do at home and deliver via mail or drop off.

Over 40% of America's rivers are too polluted for fishing, swimming or aquatic life to thrive - which is concerning given that most Americans live within a mile of a river or stream. Help clean up trash and recyclables to improve the environment and make the community safer.

What You Need:

- Work gloves
- Trash bags
- Recycle bins
- Nets and other tools for grabbing trash
- First-aid kits
- Snacks
- Life jackets, if needed for safety
- Optional: Boats for picking up trash not reachable from shore

Steps:

1. Recruit friends who are interested in the environment. Research the benefits of cleaning up waterways, such as rivers, streams and lakes. Collect information from the Parks Department, DOE or Shoreline Commission about what kinds of objects are okay to remove from a shoreline.
2. Choose a site based on where cleanup is needed and conditions that fit the strengths of your group.
3. Choose a day for cleanup and be sure to get permission to work there. You may need to prepare information about why cleanup is important and beneficial to the landowner.
4. Scout out the area in advance to identify target areas. Find paths that are easy to navigate. Identify any safety hazards and consider whether working from a canoe or boat is an option. Determine what tools are needed for cleanup. Decide where the base of operations should be located.
5. If you think there might be hazardous materials, talk to your solid waste management district about how to handle and dispose of them properly.
6. This is a great opportunity to talk to your local reporters about the event and the importance of healthy rivers for healthy communities. Local media—newspapers, blogs, radio and television—like to publish positive community stories. Notify them at least a week in advance of your event so they can prepare a story. Try everything: newspapers, radio and television stations.



7. Hold your river/stream/lake cleanup. Pick up trash and recyclables. Sort materials and carry them out with you at the end of the day to dispose of them appropriately.
8. Tell about what you did on social media. Explain what types and how much garbage you picked up from in and around the water. Ask people to take care of their trash so the water stays clean.

Reflection Questions:

- What types of pollution did you see in and around the water?
- How do you think it gets there? How do you think your community can address the root of the problem so people don't pollute and cleanup isn't necessary?
- What is the long-term effect of your work, and how can you make sure it continues after today?