

HOW TO HOST A GREAT LAKES CLEANUP

Join the movement to keep the Great Lakes watershed clean. Use these tips to make sure your shoreside or inland cleanup event runs smoothly!



1A. BEFORE THE CLEANUP

Choose a location

- Pick a high-traffic area: beach, trail, roadside, park, parking lot, etc.
- Check accessibility: parking, trail/beach conditions, public vs. private land
- Check safety: traffic, deep water, hazardous plants/animals
- Check facilities: bathrooms, water access, shade or shelter

Pick a date and time

- Schedule event at least two weeks in advance
- Set a clear start and end time
- Have a rain plan or cancellation policy

Gather supplies

- Trash bags and/or reusable buckets
- Protective gloves (reusable if possible)
- Trash grabbers (optional but helpful!)
- Hydration station
- First aid kit
- Snacks or light refreshments for volunteers
- Hand sanitizer
- Containers for sharp objects (glass jars, puncture-proof containers)

1B. BEFORE THE CLEANUP (CONT'D)

Remind volunteers to bring

- Closed-toe shoes
- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen and bug spray

Plan for trash disposal

- Contact local municipality/park service about waste pickup or disposal guidelines
- If small-scale: ask volunteers to take a bag home or use public trash cans
- Arrange recycling options if available

Get permissions

- Contact local governing body/landowner
- Apply for permits if needed
- Clarify any restrictions (e.g., hours, trash disposal rules)
- Ask if they can provide support (supplies, promotion, disposal)

Recruit Volunteers

- Create a flyer, Facebook event, and/or community post
- Clearly communicate: date, time, location, supplies needed, and expectations
- Submit event to local calendars, newsletters, radio, TV, and newspapers
- Share details with: local businesses, schools, churches, community centers

2. DURING THE CLEANUP

Stay safe

- Wear gloves at all times
- Be cautious with unknown or sharp objects
- Safely dispose of sharp items in a solid container
- Use buddy system for younger volunteers

Collect data

- Count total pieces of trash collected
- Take before/after photos and action shots
- Record additional trash data like weight, types of trash, etc.

Debrief and celebrate

- Collect final trash tally and weight
- Share cleanup results with volunteers
- Discussion common trash items and ways to reduce waste
- Take a group celebration photo
- Thank volunteers for their time and effort

3. AFTER THE CLEANUP

Report your results

- Report your cleanup data at www.greatlakeslove.org
- Share results with local media and on social media. Highlight your impact (e.g., number of volunteers, pounds of trash collected).
- Invite others to host their own cleanup