

# BASIC STEPS FOR COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS

## The Basic Steps

The following steps are provided for a Level 3 Clean-Up. You can use the steps below as general guidelines as you plan a Level 1, 2 3 or 4 clean-up.

### STEP 1. Select the area for clean-up

It may be your entire community or a small area within a community such as a neighborhood. This will be the area where you will distribute information, collect bags of debris, and clean up public places. It's helpful to choose an area with readily identifiable boundaries in the event you publicize



the area through newspapers or flyers. (i.e. Lincoln Park Neighborhood).

In addition to identifying public areas that will be cleaned up, you may also choose to encourage residents to clean up the curbs and driveways in front of their houses. Residents can

bag leaves and organic material from their curbs and either bring the bags to a compost site or have the organizing group pick them up during a set time on Clean-Up Day. Obtain a map of the area to assist in information distribution.

### STEP 2. Contact your community or city maintenance office

Your city public works department or city offices can help you with maps, and compost site hours. If they sweep streets, they will provide you the scheduled dates. Provide them with an informational fact sheet or brochure about the program from this toolkit.



You will want your city public works department to know that this is a pollution prevention project that supports the hard work its employees do to keep the streets clean and you would appreciate any help they can provide. However, their approval is not needed for you to conduct a clean-up.

Information to obtain:

- Map of the area designated for clean-up
- Compose site hours
- Street sweeping date(s)

### STEP 3. Choose a date and time

Weekends are popular for Community Clean-Ups. Choose a date at least one month in advance to allow time to fully prepare. Clean-Ups can be scheduled in the

APRIL 2014						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

fall or in the spring of the year. In the fall, you will want to schedule the date as early as possible prior to the first major snow storm, but after most leaves have fallen from the trees. In the spring, schedule it as soon as possible after the snow melts and before rainstorms wash the decaying leaves and soil from lawns, snow banks and gutters. Prior to picking a

day, check with your city to determine if and when street sweeping is conducted. You may want to schedule your clean-up prior to this time to keep a majority of the debris out of lakes, rivers and streams. However, scheduling it after street sweeping will clean up all remaining materials.

An alternative date should also be chosen in the event of inclement weather.

### STEP 4. Recruit volunteers

If your organization is sponsoring the Community Clean-Up, recruit members and complete the volunteer sign-up sheet (page 15). Also consider recruiting your friends, family and neighbors and perhaps work with another community group to recruit sufficient volunteers to help with publicizing the Clean-Up. This toolkit provides samples of flyers, brochures, and newsletter articles to help recruit volunteers.

Depending on the size of the clean-up area, you will need from 6–30 volunteers. Be sure to remind volunteers to bring gloves, rakes, shovels, brooms, and safety vests if possible, and to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. You will also want volunteers with pickup trucks or trailers to transport the bags to the compost site. Depending on your resources, you may also need volunteers to bring a box of yard waste bags.



### STEP 5. Engage civic or community leaders

Bring attention to your Community Clean-Up and increase media coverage by involving your civic leaders. Your mayor, city council members, commissioners or a legislators might like the opportunity to participate in the event or support the event through local media. Provide them with a copy of the informational fact sheet or brochure and let them know the date of your Community Clean-Up.

Your city council or mayor may be able to issue a proclamation for the Clean-Up Day (page 23).

### STEP 6. Publicize the Clean-Up

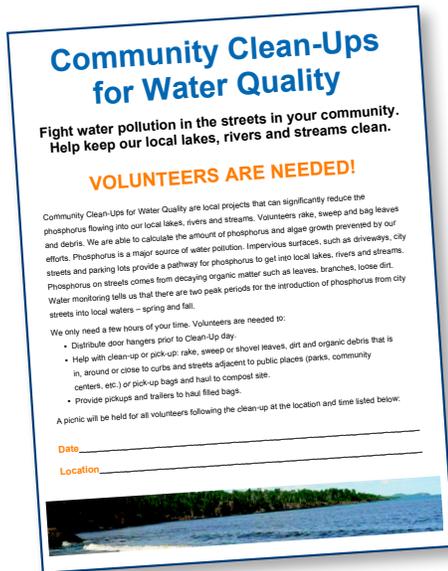
Approximately three weeks before is the ideal time to let community members know about the Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality program through an article in the local newspaper. An article will help inform community residents about the project and encourage them to participate by collecting leaves and debris in front of their houses. Invite a newspaper reporter to cover the event on your Clean-Up Day.



If it is community wide, ask the local paper to enclose a flyer or run an ad in the weekly newspaper one week prior (see flyer sample on page 14 and ad samples on pages 20-21). This flyer explains the program and asks residents to rake the curb, streets and boulevards in front of their homes, bag the debris and either take it to the compost site or leave it for your organization to pick up on the Clean-Up Day. It also encourages them to complete the card on the door hanger to provide credit

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for the work and to help us in measuring how much pollution they have prevented.



If you decide to distribute a door hanger/flyer by hand, rather than through the paper, place the flyer/door hanger in each resident's newspaper box or on the front door knob in the area covered by the Community Clean-Up.

Identify as many ways as possible to get the message out about your Community Clean-Up to benefit the entire community. This toolkit provides samples of materials you can use for:

- Newspapers
- Newsletters
- Radio/TV stations
- Utility bill stuffers



Don't forget:

- Church bulletins
- City newsletters/websites
- School newsletters/websites

Publicizing the Community Clean-Up does two things:

1. Informs residents of the who, what, why and when of the event.
2. Educates everyone about the cause of water pollution and what they can do to improve water quality in their lakes, rivers and streams.



## STEP 7. Seek sponsors

A great way to show your appreciation to volunteers is by holding a celebration with food after the clean-up. If you have your own resources, great! If not, look for a local grocery store or restaurant to donate food and drinks. Describe the program and tell them how it benefits the community and recognize them as a sponsor of the clean-up. Also, plan for a place to have the celebration and let volunteers know on the flyers. This could be the same place that you will meet as a group to begin the clean-up.

Designate a few people to prepare the food following the clean-up.

## STEP 8. Prepare for Clean-Up Day

One week before, volunteers will distribute door hangers to residents and flyers to public places in the participating area to let citizens know about the clean-up, how they can help, and why the project is being done. Templates of these materials are provided in this toolkit. Also,

- Reconfirm with your city maintenance office the compost site and hours of operation
- Enlist volunteers with pickup trucks or cars with trailers to pick up the bags
- Obtain maps of the areas to schedule local volunteer and support vehicles

- Secure needed materials (Levels 1,3,4):
  - Rakes, shovels, brooms, gloves (ask volunteers to bring from home)
  - Yard waste bags (plan on 30 bags per person) (3–4 hours)
- Safety vests (your city may have these available for use)



### Weather Contingency Plan

Have a weather contingency plan in place. Compile a list of volunteer phone numbers and email addresses and plan to call or email them the night before or the morning of the event if it is postponed. Also, have a person at the meeting site in case other volunteers show up on the day of the clean-up, not aware that it was postponed.

## STEP 9. Clean-Up Day – HAVE FUN!

- **Gathering Site**  
Determine a site and time to have all volunteers meet on the morning of the clean-up such as a local park, community center or school.



- **Volunteer Check In**  
Place a check-in station near the parking area to register all volunteers. Review all clean-up instructions; thank special guests, sponsors and volunteers.

- **Opening Remarks**  
Briefly talk about the importance of the Community Clean-Up for Water Quality Program and the vital work all are doing to protect and restore our water resources.

Acknowledge and thank volunteers, sponsors, and city staff for their support and participation.

- **Support Vehicles**  
Ensure you have support vehicles such as pickup trucks or cars with trailers to transport the debris.

- **Materials**  
Materials needed for that day will be yard waste bags (35 gallons or larger), leaf rakes, shovels, brooms and gloves. Also have volunteers bring cameras to document your work.

- **Assignment of Groups**  
Distribute a map of the area, if needed. Identify the areas for each support vehicle, group the volunteers in specific areas for collection. Designate a leader to manage each group of volunteers at the assigned area.

- **Recorder**  
Have one volunteer at the compost or collection site to count and record the number of bags delivered by clean-up volunteers.



- **Empty Bags**  
Most compost sites require you to empty the bags and take the empty bags for appropriate disposal, recycling or reuse.

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- **Separate Trash**

Separate any recyclable materials you may encounter (plastic bottles, etc.) and bring to a recycling center or make arrangements with your city for trash pickup.

- **Take Pictures**

Have cameras with each volunteer group (if possible) to take pictures of the activities and fun.



- **Prepare to Celebrate!**

Have food arranged for a picnic after the event. Arrange a time for all volunteers to return to either the meeting place or another area for the celebration.



## **STEP 10. Host Clean-Up Party**

Gather all volunteers and sponsors to celebrate a job well done! Have a picnic, cookout or lunch.

## **STEP 11. Publicize your success!**

Submit pictures and information about the clean-up success to your local paper, newsletters, city websites, etc. Sharing this information recognizes the hard work of the volunteers and educates the entire community about preventing water pollution (pages 27-28).

## **STEP 12. Schedule an Annual Clean-Up for Water Quality**

Now that you have successfully completed a clean-up, the program will grow with new volunteers each year. Announce the annual Community Clean-Up to all volunteers.

## **STEP 13. Report your success**

We want to hear about your project! Visit our website and report information about your Clean-Up. We are compiling information from around the state to show the collective impact of projects. Go to [www.freshwater.org](http://www.freshwater.org) and click on the link to Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality.