

TIPS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS

Overview

Stormwater runoff is one of the most common causes of water pollution. Stormwater is rainwater or snowmelt that, instead of soaking into the ground, runs off of streets, lawns, farms, and construction and industrial sites and into local lakes, rivers and streams. Stormwater drain systems are designed to efficiently and quickly carry runoff water to a nearby water body that may then drain to other lakes, rivers and streams. Stormwater carries with it leaves, grass clippings, twigs, soil and other types of debris that contain phosphorus and other plant nutrients and create algae blooms and degrade water quality. Because the ground is frozen for a portion of the year, it is particularly important to prevent the transport of these nutrients from grass clippings and leaves in the late fall or early spring. Plants are unable to use the nutrients and it is very likely that a fall or spring rainstorm will carry these highly decomposed materials quickly over the land and into our lakes and rivers. And since most Minnesotans live within a short distance from a lake, river or stream, participating in a Community Clean-Up for Water Quality will help each community make its local water cleaner.



The problem

In the spring and the fall, leaves and organic material end up on our streets, get ground up by cars, decay and are washed into storm drains. This contributes to the excess nutrients in water bodies, which degrade water quality by reducing the amount of oxygen available for fish and other aquatic species. Forty percent of Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams have been degraded by runoff and other contaminants.

The solution

Join or organize a Community Clean-up for Water Quality. This program has been successfully run in the Minnesota River Watershed since 2003 by the Friends of Minnesota Valley.

Time commitment

It takes very little time to have a huge impact. It will take around 10–12 hours of organizing and distributing information prior to the Clean-Up Day, 3–4 hours on Clean-Up Day and a couple of hours more to celebrate your accomplishment!

Who can conduct a Community Clean-Up?

The activity is not strenuous and most clean-ups can be performed by volunteers of all ages. The group can be either small or large; it just requires a commitment to improve water quality. Any type of group can do a clean-up: church groups, scout groups, civic organizations, students as part of service projects, environmental or conservation organizations and groups of neighbors.

How will this help our lakes, rivers and streams?

Holding a Community Clean-Up in your community will foster a sense of working together, will educate people about water quality and will reinforce their commitment to a cleaner, stronger, community and instill a sense of pride. Keeping our water clean can seem like an overwhelming job and many people wonder if they can really make a difference. As part of your Clean-Up, you will be able to easily measure the results of your effort.

Make the commitment to conduct a Community Clean-Up for Water Quality and become part of a growing network of citizens working to improve the natural resources of our state.

Decide on Your Level of Clean-Up

Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality can be conducted in a variety of ways depending on the number of volunteers and energy!



LEVEL 1 (Tadpole)

- **Inform Residents** - Volunteers distribute door hangers to residents informing them of the pollution problem, providing tips on how they can prevent pollution all year long, and encouraging residents to clean-up their street and boulevard. Residents will be asked to report to your organization the number of bags they have filled and composted.
- **Public Place Clean-Up** - Pick a date for your group to conduct a curb and boulevard clean-up adjacent to public properties such as parks, schools and unattended land.



LEVEL 2 (Fingerling)

- **Inform Residents** - Volunteers distribute door hangers, flyers, and place newspaper ads or inserts to encourage residents to clean their curbs and boulevards; then record the number of bags filled and either take them directly to the compost site or place them on the boulevard for the Pick-Up Day.
- **Pick-Up Day** - Your group organizes a Pick-Up Day to collect bags from the boulevard and take them to the compost site.

LEVEL 3 (Turtle)



- **Inform Residents** - Volunteers distribute door hangers, flyers, and place newspaper ads or inserts to encourage residents to clean their curbs and boulevards; then record the number of bags filled and take them to the compost site or place them on the boulevard for the Pick-Up Day.
- **Pick-Up Day** - Your group organizes a Pick-Up Day to collect bags from the boulevard and take them to the composite site.
- **Public Place Clean-Up** - Your group conducts a curb and boulevard clean-up adjacent to public properties such as parks, schools and unattended land.



LEVEL 4 (Muskie)

- **This is the big one!** Your group is so committed you do all of the above both spring and fall.
- A clean-up at any level will help to reduce the pollution in our lakes, rivers and streams. Asking residents to get involved increases the number of people who are preventing pollution and provides a broader education for the community on what individuals can do to prevent pollution all year long.

Once you have decided on a level, register your clean-up online at www.freshwater.org. Click on Community Clean-Ups for Water Quality and fill in the information. This will provide your residents with an online option to record their individual efforts and provide a database to calculate your pollution prevention efforts. We will also be able to assist you with questions and fill requests for items such as door hangers or other materials.