



Why River Cleanups Are Important

Millions of tons of trash end up in our nation's rivers and streams every year from litter on the ground and illegal dump sites. Trash is more than just an eyesore; it can contaminate drinking water and threaten the lives of all who depend on it. Most people see for the first time the harm caused by trash in their river at a river cleanup. They are transformed by a great sense of accomplishment after piling up their bags of trash. The benefits surrounding river cleanups are not just short term – there are many long term effects as well.

Individuals participating in the river cleanup are often left with a feeling of ownership and responsibility for the river.

Immediately following a cleanup, local communities can see the result of picking up litter and other debris. No longer do cans, tires and debris line the banks of the river, or float across the river's surface. River cleanups also provide an excellent way to educate volunteers on other problems a river is facing. Whether it be run-off, sewage overflow, gas drilling, or invasive species, participants will want to know "what else they can do" after the cleanup is over.

In the long term, communities benefit both economically and socially from a cleaner, healthier river.

Increased property values, reduced human health risks and improved quality of life are just a few things healthy rivers provide. Recreation along rivers will also increase – less trash in and around rivers will provide the community with a clean and safe place to walk and run trails and paddle in clean waters. The recreational impacts that surround a clean river will provide the community with increased tourism, affecting both their economy and well-being.

Cleanups are an excellent way to reconnect your community to your river.

The benefits of the cleanups are apparent while participating in a cleanup and extend far into the future. Cleanups are also a great way to meet your neighbors and get some fresh air!

