

Organize your own River Cleanup

Every April the Clark Fork Coalition hosts a community-wide river cleanup where hundreds of Missoulians come together to give back to the river they love. Our volunteers remove tons (literally!) of trash at this event each year, but keeping the Clark Fork clean is a 24/7 job. Follow these key steps to organize your own river cleanup and help to ensure the health of our hometown river year-round.



1) Know your volunteers and choose an appropriate site: River channels and riverbanks can be dangerous, especially during times of high water. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your volunteers and choose a cleanup site that is appropriate for everyone. Whether you choose to walk, float, boat or bike, finding a safe way to execute your cleanup is extremely important. If you have questions about a choosing a site please contact us. As you're local river experts, we're here to help!

2) Know your site: Rivers are constantly changing—water levels fluctuate daily changing how quickly things are transported downstream. We recommend scouting your cleanup site several times before getting to work. This will help you to identify potential hazards and will help you determine what supplies might be necessary to remove the unwanted waste.

3) Getting permission: It's always a good idea to know who owns the property you intend to clean up. Obtaining permission from the government agency or property owner of the site makes them aware of what you're doing, which can help them communicate any safety issues or concerns that they have with the intended site. It's also a great way to potentially recruit other volunteers. If you have a question about land ownership of the stretch you are interested in targeting please contact the Missoula County Survey Office at 406-258-4870.

4) Recruit Volunteers: Volunteer recruitment is a great way to connect with your friends, neighbors, church, local outfitters, recreational clubs, and community and environmental groups. Participating in a river cleanup is an extremely rewarding experience and can help instill a sense of pride and ownership in the river we all love. All it takes is a friendly ask!

5) Gather supplies: All you'll need are some sturdy work gloves or rubber gloves and trash bags. Feel free to use your own supplies or consider contacting local businesses to ask for donated materials.

6) Things to know before you go: Before you and your group of volunteers get to work it's important to recognize and thank your volunteers for their participation. Additionally, briefly talking about the details of the event i.e. site location (we recommend using a map to show volunteers exactly where they'll be working), plan for trash disposal, areas and trash items to avoid, pre-identified hazards, length of cleanup, and your plan for accounting for all volunteers.

7) Execute your cleanup: Now that you have a site identified, volunteers organized, supplies gathered and eager river stewards ready to take action enjoy whatever amount of time you decide to dedicate to your cleanup endeavor. Please remember to stay alert to your volunteers and surroundings throughout the cleanup and to dispose of trash and recyclables appropriately.