

# III. "How To" For Cleanup Coordinators

People have been cleaning up our rivers for years, all with different geography, circumstances, and challenges, and it goes without saying that there is no one "right" way to organize a River Cleanup. However, there are some basics that should be covered in order to make your job as Cleanup Coordinator a little easier. What follows is a step-by-step guide on organizing the Cleanup. There are many details left out, mainly on purpose. Each watershed will be faced with different circumstances, and these should be dealt with individually. This guide can get you started, but your fellow Cleanup coordinators, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Coastal Cleanup statewide director are always available to help with any specific questions.

## A. Recruiting and Getting Your Cleanup Team in Place

There are two distinct ways to get started on organizing a River Cleanup in your area. You can choose to either: 1) select the sites you want to clean first, and then recruit site captains for those specific areas; or 2) find your group of Site Captains first, and then select the areas to clean next. We recommend that you seek out Site Captains first. These captains are generally committed, local volunteers who will immediately become your best resource for finding and selecting those sites in your community that can most use some concerted effort. Finding your Site Captains first also keeps you from over-reaching – you will be forced to only choose enough sites to fit the number of captains you have, rather than scrambling to find potential captains at the last minute for sites that you have already advertised.

Each Cleanup site must have a Site Captain. (Cleanup Coordinators often captain an individual site, as well.) The captain is the person in charge at each site, greeting and directing volunteers, watching out for everyone's safety, and keeping the event running. They can also help you manage much of the Cleanup preparation and logistics. The step-by-step Captains' Cleanup Guide is included in this guide – please make a copy for each of your Captains. It can be helpful to go over this guide, especially with new volunteers, at your Site Captains Meeting. This is your guide, too – you can use the checklist to keep tabs on each Cleanup captain's progress on the assigned tasks.

Regular meetings with your Cleanup captains are very helpful. At least one meeting of the entire group is essential in order to distribute Cleanup materials and supplies, introduce any new initiatives that you have undertaken for the year, and to help place the Cleanup in a broader perspective (i.e., their Cleanup is just one of several occurring within your region, which is one of 60 Cleanup regions across more than 50 counties in California, which in turn is only one of the hundreds of states or countries taking part in the International Coastal Cleanup, etc...). However, the more communication between you and your captains, the better. You do not want to overwhelm anyone, but involving your volunteers early and often can help them feel more connected to the program, can help you get done what needs to be done, and can help the event to run much more smoothly for everyone.



## B. Arrange for Cleanup Sites

Choosing sites for the Cleanup can involve a variety of factors: how popular the site is within the community, how dirty the site is, how accessible the site is for volunteers, and more. If this is your first Cleanup, ask volunteers, board members, government agencies, and community members

### Possible Partners in Your Watershed

You most likely will have to work with at least one agency for your Cleanup. They could provide valuable information on possible sites. The agencies should also guide you in how to deal with hauling out the trash and recycling from the sites. Some of these agencies (and companies) you may work with are:

- Bureau of Land Management
- California State Parks
- US Forest Service
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Cal Trans
- Local/County Water Agency
- Area waste company
- National Guard (for waste removal)
- CA Conservation Corps
- City and County officials
- CA Fish & Wildlife
- Resource Conservation Districts

about potential sites. If you already have Site Captains established, work with them to put together a list of potential locations in your watershed. You will want to do a site visit, preferably with your Site Captain, to scope out: area size, potential hazards, specific items to haul away (refrigerators, cars, etc.) Then, contact the appropriate authorities at each Cleanup site to secure permission and make arrangements for the Cleanup. Every Cleanup site is under some organization's management, whether it's in private or public (agency) ownership. It's best to contact these managers well in advance of the Cleanup – usually this takes nothing more than a quick phone call or e-mail to let the agency or owner know on which day your Cleanup is taking place this year, but some sites have more complicated permitting requirements.

There are a variety of locations and types of Cleanups that you can arrange for the GSRC. Organizing neighborhood Cleanups near streams or storm drains that flow to the river or creek, for example, will help illustrate that many of the pollutants that harm the river originate elsewhere. Some cities or counties have storm drain stenciling

programs (marking storm drains with the slogan "No Dumping-Drains to Creek" or similar message). Similarly, you can organize underwater dive Cleanups, as well as boat, canoe, or kayak Cleanups.

Habitat restoration days or other similar environmental stewardship events can also be scheduled to coincide with your Cleanup. Ideally, the planned activity would involve removing trash and/or invasive plant species from a water body, but any activity that lends itself to the concepts of clean water and healthy aquatic ecosystems is welcome to become part of the GSRC.

If parking is not normally free at your Cleanup sites, try to arrange for free parking permits on the day of the Cleanup for all participants. Most agencies are more than happy to accommodate such requests for special events. This can be a wonderful incentive to get people to turn out to the Cleanup.

## C. Organize Cleanup Logistics

- 1. Figure out your GSRC materials order.** Be sure to read through the Material Order Form Instructions in the Forms Packet to figure out what you need from the SNC for your Cleanup. If this is your first Cleanup the instructions will provide guidelines for how much to order. If you've done a Cleanup before, a good rule of thumb for estimating supplies is to add 10 percent to the previous year's turnout to account for growth, and order the supplies needed for that new number. Your past Site Captains may have additional information about their specific needs. Once the numbers are compiled, turn in your material order form to SNC (see Forms Packet) by the deadline.
- 2. Arrange for trash and recycling pick-up.** You will need to contact your local trash hauler or land owning agency to make special arrangements for the day of the Cleanup, as there will be a lot more trash than they are accustomed to and they will have to be prepared to help. Some haulers make special pickup runs or drop off dumpsters at designated collection sites. If your volunteers are actually taking your trash and recycling to the dump, be sure they ask for a receipt. Your trash hauler will need a complete list of your Cleanup locations, so have that ready before you make the call. If you haven't worked with your local recycling center before and do not know how to contact them, call 800-Cleanup or visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) to find your local facility. Even if you have arranged for trash pickup with another agency, these centers may be a good avenue for recruiting volunteers to pick up the recycling bags or to sort the recyclables. Sanitation Departments, local Conservation Corps, and other local agencies can also help with recycling.
- 3. Hold meetings to clarify procedures, allocate supplies and exchange information on Cleanup techniques – both successes and failures.** Go over the Site Captains Guide with your team so everyone knows what's expected and can prepare. Survey your captains to determine which Cleanup sites can handle large numbers of last-minute volunteers, and then compile these sites into a list of "drop-in sites" as a way to easily direct volunteers to a Cleanup in the last days leading up to the event. In particular, please work out how your captains will get results to you from each Cleanup site so you can phone in your results by 1 pm on GSRC day. Finally, end the meeting by distributing Cleanup supplies and collateral materials to your captains. (*A sample Site Captain meeting agenda is included in Appendix D.*)

### Things to consider when choosing sites:

- Who owns the site?
- Will they give you permission to access it?
- Do you need a key or combination to a lock to get into the site?
- Is there safe access to the site?
- Is it a suitable site for children to clean up?
- How easy will it be to get the trash out?
- Who will take the trash and recycling to the landfill?
- What help do you need from agencies or other organizations?
- Do you need special equipment like 4-WD vehicles, helicopters?
- How many volunteers are needed for the size of the site?
- Is there graffiti? If you are dealing with graffiti removal, be sure to get the OK from landowners and find the best, nontoxic, environmentally-safe remover. Bring buckets, gloves.

## D. Publicity and Promotion

The SNC and the CCC are responsible for regional and statewide promotion of the GSRC and Coastal Cleanup Day, but as much as we may try, we can't have as great an impact as you can in promoting the event in your local community. We try to provide all of the tools you will need to help spread the word about the GSRC and CCD. Along with all of your Cleanup supplies, we will provide posters, T-shirts, sample press releases, sample proclamations (available later in this guide), website and social media posts, and other promotional materials – all of these items can be extremely helpful in raising awareness about your Cleanup. There is a complete media guide included in this guide, but here are some additional tips for how to publicize the Cleanup:

**City and County Official Proclamations** – Many local governments are willing to issue a proclamation honoring the Cleanup in official session. This provides an opportunity for “official” sanctioning of your efforts, as well as local press coverage. A sample letter to be presented at your local council meeting can be found in this guide. In addition to seeking a proclamation, encourage your local officials to actively participate on the day of the Cleanup.

*(A sample proclamation can be found in Appendix F.)*

**Media** – The Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Coastal Commission will send out public service announcements (PSAs) and press releases to media stations throughout the state and Sierra.

However, local television and radio stations, as well as local newspapers, are much more likely to air a story or PSA about the Cleanup if the information comes from a member of their local community – YOU! Please use the sample materials you'll find in this manual to help you develop your own press release or PSA – and then fax or e-mail it to every media outlet in your area. (You can adapt these using your local information so that you can issue a concurrent release – as long as the release states that your event is “part of the Great Sierra River Cleanup and the statewide California Coastal Cleanup Day.” This will help avoid confusion and place your event in a wider context. Follow-up phone calls will go a long way towards helping your press release get noticed in the newsroom.)

The ‘preliminary results release’ that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Coastal Commission send out on Cleanup Day is the big payoff – the media is anxious to publicize this information, and it helps get the core message about the Cleanup to millions of people. The success of this release is dependent on the information you provide, so please gather your results quickly so that you can call us with your Cleanup totals by 1 pm on Cleanup Day.

Finally, we do realize that it's not always possible to get all of your results in by the day of the Cleanup. The CCC will do a final “Cleanup Results” release in October, so we will need your final totals by mid-October.

### Establish a Central Staging Location

You may want to plan to designate one or more sites (as needed) as staging areas for groups and individual volunteers who have not been assigned to a specific Cleanup. The staging area provides a location for the media or a press conference, as well as a drop-in site for last-minute volunteers.

Be sure to select a Cleanup location that can handle a large number of volunteers, in case of large turnout. The site(s) should be easily accessible for registration and pre- or post-Cleanup activities with good access and (preferably free) parking.

**Involving Local Business** — In addition to asking local merchants to display event posters in their stores, you may also wish to ask them for donations of food and materials for GSRC Day. (*More information can be found on securing sponsors and donations in Section VI.*)

## E. Day of the Cleanup

A complete run-down of our suggested “Day of the Cleanup” activities is included in Appendix B of this manual. If you are running a specific Cleanup site in addition to coordinating your region, please review the Site Captain Guide for more information. If not, here are a few tips to make the day of the Cleanup run as smoothly as possible:

1. Provide your Site Captains with multiple phone numbers for you so that they can reach you if emergencies come up, if they run out of supplies, or when they report their results. **Let them know if they can text you as well.**
2. Designate someone in addition to yourself to field calls from the media. If all goes well, you should be receiving more media calls than you can handle at one time!
3. Have at least one or more volunteers standing by with extra supplies in case one or more of your Site Captains runs out during the Cleanup. These volunteers should have cars that are loaded with extra supplies so that they can make a re-supply run if called upon.
4. Have handy the phone numbers for your local police, fire departments and hospitals. If Cleanup volunteers find hazardous waste or have an emergency, you and your Site Captains will need to know who to contact immediately in order to take care of the problem.
5. Make arrangements for easy communication with all of your Site Captains on the day of the Cleanup. Make a list of all of your captains’ cell phone numbers. If you know that some sites don’t get cell reception, try to find out the closest place where cell phones work. Sometimes texting works, when calls are not possible.

## Assign volunteers to Cleanup sites

Once volunteers start calling and e-mailing, you will need to have information ready about how they can participate.

Here are some tips for how to handle these specific volunteer requests:

**LARGE GROUPS:** Assign large school, corporate, and religious groups early. (Note: sometimes large groups might be the best to put at remote sites because they are organized and usually have group transportation.)

**MAPS:** Provide maps and/or VERY clear directions for all your sites. Directions should include not only how to get there, but also parking instructions, where to meet the Site Captain, etc. Send the directions with liability waivers and safety information to groups calling to register. Make it clear online, in calls and through signage on the Cleanup Day that parents need to stay with children who are thirteen and under.

**MORE INVOLVEMENT:** Keep an ear out for any volunteer who may be interested in greater involvement. These volunteers could become new Site Captains, especially those who have an interest in a site that you are not currently planning on cleaning up. Always seek to expand your Cleanup, if at all possible.

Alternatively, some regions have amateur short-wave radio groups that can aid in communication. Any of these methods will help you stay in communication with your captains throughout the day, making sure everything is running smoothly and enabling you to get results that much faster.

6. **Compile all necessary paperwork, phone numbers, and maps in one folder per site - ready to go for the day of the Cleanup.**

## F. Post Cleanup

1. All forms, data cards, and waivers must be sent into the Sierra Nevada Conservancy by mid-October. See your "Forms Checklist" in the Forms Packet for the complete list.
2. Be sure to go through and keep all your Site Captain Forms (these don't get sent to SNC). They will have valuable info for next year's event. Also be sure to keep all site information: directions, special notes about sites, etc.
3. Write up or update your work plan for next year's event. Include as many specific dates as possible. **If you are an AmeriCorps Member planning or assisting in the event, be sure to put the plans in your Legacy Binder.**
4. Inventory your remaining supplies so that you can adjust your order for next year.
5. You will receive an evaluation survey soon after the event. Please fill out this questionnaire as completely as possible. These are helpful for ongoing program evaluation and to help us continue to improve the program.
6. Send thank-you certificates to all your Cleanup Captains and sponsors. The GSRC will provide you with blank certificates to which you can add each recipient's name or organization.

*Please read through the sample work plans, included in Appendix E of this manual, to see how others have organized their Cleanup Day.*



## More Ideas ... Post Cleanup

- Each year chart your results for each site to be able to see differences from year to year.
- Send final results to local government. Highlight items of local concern.
- With a thank-you to your sponsors, include results of the cleanup. Be sure to include numbers of people involved, pounds of trash/recyclables, etc.
- Post your data online so it's available to students for research purposes.