



Don't see an event in your region?

Explore this event guide and consider hosting your own shoreline cleanup.

- Recommended Event duration: 1–3 hours
- Suitable for: Families, schools, community groups, stewardship organizations
- Group size: 2–30+ participants
- Main activity: Remove litter and improve freshwater ecosystems
- Skill level: Beginner friendly
- Cost: Low cost (gloves, garbage bags, and cleanup supplies required)

Shoreline Cleanup Event Guide


A lakeshore or riverbank cleanup is a simple act with a lasting impact, protecting wildlife, restoring natural beauty, and strengthening the health of freshwater ecosystems through hands-on community action. Participants work together to remove litter and debris from shoreline areas, helping prevent pollution from entering water systems and reducing harm to fish, birds, and other wildlife. Each cleanup contributes to healthier habitats and a deeper understanding of the connection between human activity and freshwater health.

1. Select your site

- Choose a publicly accessible shoreline that is safe to reach by foot. Consider accessibility, permissions, and environmental risks.

2. Conduct a hazard assessment

- Visit the site in advance to identify potential hazards and outline mitigation measures to reduce risk, including unstable banks, fast-moving water, wildlife activity, and access limitations.

-  [Hazard Assessment.pdf](#)

3. Plan logistics

- Determine equipment needs and event logistics, including group structure, weather considerations, cleanup boundaries, and waste collection and disposal.

4. Create a participant plan

- Share key details including: event description, start/end times, meeting location, directions, transportation options, what to bring/wear, and contact information.

5. Prepare a waiver

- Consider using a standard volunteer waiver and ensure all participants sign it before the event (online or in person at check-in).

6. Promote your event

- Share with local schools, libraries, youth groups, and community groups. Post on social media and submit your event through the [One Day of Action for Water registration form](#) to be included on the map.

7. Host your cleanup

- Begin with a safety briefing and site orientation. Distribute materials and clearly assign cleanup areas or zones. Review site rules, expectations, and safety guidelines, ensuring participants understand how to handle waste safely and what items should not be touched (e.g., hazardous materials). Support participants throughout the cleanup to maintain safety, coordination, and low-impact practices while protecting the surrounding environment.

8. Document & report

- Record participation details, waste categories, and total weight collected (kg). Submit photos, metrics, to Living Lakes Canada for reporting and sharing. Document and securely store signed waivers to ensure participant safety and liability coverage.

Basic Equipment Checklist

- Gloves
- Garbage bags
- Buckets
- Grabbers/tongs
- First aid kit
- Sharps container

Define your cleanup area

Before the event, decide how much shoreline your group will realistically cover. A good rule of thumb is to prioritize quality over distance.

Consider:

- Group size and experience level
- Terrain difficulty (steep, rocky, dense vegetation)
- Weather and conditions on the day
- Time available for the cleanup
- How much detail you want to collect data from (smaller areas allow more thorough cleanup and documentation)

A helpful starting point is to assign approximately 100–300 metres of shoreline per small group, adjusting based on conditions. For larger groups, divide the shoreline into sections so teams can work independently without overlap.

It is better to fully clean and document a smaller area than to spread too far and miss debris or create safety risks.

Permits & approvals

Contact local municipal or environmental authorities in advance to confirm any required permissions, especially if working near or in water or sediments.

Data & documentation


Use a standard tracking sheet to record waste weights by category (kg). Take photos throughout the event to document progress, including large or inaccessible debris for municipal follow-up, as well as bagged waste and the team at the end to celebrate and capture the impact of the day.

Group size

Keep groups small and manageable to support safety and coordination. Events can range from just 2 participants to 30+ depending on your capacity and comfort level. No group is too small. Every effort matters and deserves to be recognized and celebrated.

Safety & Operations

Tailgate Safety Meeting (required before starting)

- Assign a main coordinator
- Review site hazards and boundaries
- Assign a main coordinator
- Explain safety rules clearly before any cleanup begins
- Use this template to complete your safety meeting  Tailgate Safety Meeting .pdf

Key safety rules

- Do not touch syringes, needles, or unknown hazardous items. Report to a coordinator immediately
- Avoid reaching into unseen or concealed areas (e.g., under logs or dense brush)
- Be cautious near steep, slippery, or unstable shoreline areas and flowing water
- Do not touch face or food while wearing gloves; sanitize hands after removal

- Children must be directly supervised at all times

Avoid entering the water or disturbing sediments. Focus cleanup efforts from the shoreline and banks.

Disclaimer

This guide is intended to support community-led shoreline cleanup events for informational purposes only. Organizers are responsible for assessing the site conditions, participant safety, and any permits or permissions that may be required. Participation is voluntary and at the participant's own risk.

We recommend connecting with Living Lakes Canada or a local stewardship organization for additional guidance and support.