

# Shoreline Cleanups

Lake cleanups are win-win projects. You can involve old and young alike. Spread your water safety word and cleanup the environment. It doesn't get any better than this and at very little cost.

Usually two lake massive cleanups are about all you can handle per year. Spring and autumn seem to be the best times for cleanups. The spring will take care of the winter debris and prepare the lake for the onslaught of visitors. Autumn gathering will rid the shoreline and lake surface of materials the tourist left behind during the summer vacation.

Your goal is to get as much rubbish from the reservoir and ensure your good stewardship story is told, along with water safety information. That's a challenge.

One method to accomplishing this mission is early planning and involvement Marina/boat dock operators may have an association and love to compete against each other. The US Army Corps of Engineers lake/operations manager and park rangers might be the judges. Trash is the deciding factors; the most collected at a particular dock is declared the winner.

Your lake folks could count the litter by weight or truckloads as it is hauled away. Games are enjoyable and competition will add to the tons of trash if orchestrated properly.

A good time to announce the cleanup is during a regular boat dock/marina meeting just after the first of the year. This will give them time to get their flyers and/or poster printed, and give you time to get the word out to civic, service and fraternal groups, as well as schools, clubs, teams and organizations such as the Scouts. Politicians love to be involved when the environment is being cleaned up and media reps are expected. On the other hand, politicians bring media, too. Don't forget the celebrities.

Start early with your poster campaign. Get them printed and in store windows around the lake. Water related clubs and groups can be of assistance from start to finish.

To help defray the cost of the cleanup you might get a business like a soft drink company

to co-sponsor the "cleanup game." Co-sponsors can produce giveaways like t-shirts for each participant. Imagine your shirt with "Great\_(your lake) Lake Cleanup, (date), sponsored by\_(co-sponsor) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Co-sponsors can also provide gifts for the winning dock, winning group and maybe the winning individual. They might want to donate the trash bags printed with the cleanup logo and both organizations' names. Companies love this type of community involvement and will help in getting the word out.

Get the media involved early on. One technique that has not been used very often is a cartoon countdown in the newspapers. It starts with the first news release announcing when the cleanup will be held, what areas are to be picked up, where trash bags will be available, where they should be taken and when all the trash will be hauled away from the boat docks. The same cartoon character continues in the newspaper each week, with fewer and fewer days until the last week it says, for example, "The cleanup is SATURDAY!" If the newspaper will not go along with providing the free space, maybe the co-sponsor will defray the cost as they will have their name in the "ad", too.

Remember, at the end of your news release add, "for additional information about the cleanup contact ...". Then list names, locations, telephone numbers.

During your pre-publicity campaign work with the local radio and television stations. They, too, are looking for events to co-sponsor. If they join in, expect to work long and hard with the media folks because they may overwhelm you with free airtime. Remember to constantly remind the listeners to wear life jackets, etc. Don't forget to insert the water safety message every chance you get. Your success is measured in drownings. Wouldn't it be wonderful to say, "My lake did not have ONE the entire year." It's possible.

During the cleanup you might have newspaper reporters at different locations while a radio remote team might be at one or more of the docks interviewing folks who are returning from the reservoir with mounds of garbage. TV

crews usually like to “hit-and-run.” They do not have time for in-depth - - all day -- shoots. Normally, they need just a few minutes on the evening news. Television is looking for action visual stories. Think ahead for them. A suggestion might be where and when an extra large amount of trash should arrive. You can imagine the boats chugging into the dock, loaded down with happy collectors and old worn-out tires, rusty 55-gallon drums and bags on top of bags of waste. The cameras are rolling as they wade up the ramp pulling the boat to shore, having fun. You know they will give good interviews and ugly trash makes for excellent storytellers. Make sure the boat ramp operator/owner is good on camera. If not, simply plan to escort the media to another area.

When planning this event, add the largest media outlets that cover your area, and the smallest ones, to your media agenda. Usually, the cleanups will be on Saturdays. Prior planning might get you a color feature in Sunday’s newspaper. Fishing and outdoor programs love to have in-studio guests to announce cleanups. Invite the guest and the studio director /producers/cameraman to the cleanup while on the air. It might get them out to the lake to cover your event.

Another idea is to have cleanup contests between civic groups and boat dock operators, and others. For example, place the Girl Scouts against the Boy Scouts, Elks against the Masons, Rotary Club against the Kiwanis Club, County Executive’s Office against the Mayor’s Office, County Clerk against the County Trustee, one store against another store, one sporting team against another team.

Maybe have a three-way competition between the newspaper staff against the radio station against the television station, or have the Sheriff’s Office against the Police Department against the State Troopers.

To expand your scope, contact the presidents of sporting conferences and get the entire league involved. Can you imagine an entire Minor League against the Little League or the Babe Ruth League against the Senior Babe Ruth League? Then there’s the high school baseball team against the soccer team against the cheerleaders. Or have one high school against another high school or one junior high against the elementary school. The list is infinite. It only takes time and your imagination.

Getting their families and friends involved

in your lake cleanup is an excellent way to bring others together for a good cause. And, the list goes on and on, as the lake’s garbage stack grows larger and larger.

Is it time to search for trash on your lake’s cleanup? Happy collectors find many things including TV news anchors. Good luck.