

Trail Cleanup Events: Planning Guide

A collab by onX Offroad and Public Lands Stewards of Bend, OR

Work smarter not harder, as they say. The team at onX Offroad has partnered up with the Public Lands Stewards to create this “How-To Lead a Trail Cleanup Guide.” The truth is, rallying the community can be hard enough, but you also need to think about logistics, associated costs, event promotion, and many other little details when organizing a trail cleanup. This isn’t meant to deter you, don’t worry. Rather, the opposite. Simply, follow our step by step guide to a safe, organized, and successful day. We hope this takes the wondering out of planning, so you can focus on getting it done. Our trails need cleanup heroes like you. We very gratefully thank you.

→ **Together, our trails stay healthy.**

Together, we keep access open.

Big picture things to think about when hosting a cleanup event:

First things first.
Read through this list to wrap your head around the big picture.

- Who is your target audience? (Off-roaders, human powered adventurers, families?)
- What is the ideal attendance #? Max attendance #?
- How will I promote the cleanup?
- Where should I host a cleanup?
- Is a permit needed?
- Is the goal to cleanup small items (bottles, cans, bags), big items (old cars, appliances, wood pieces), or both?
- How will we dispose of the trash after the cleanup?
- What budget do I need?
- What supplies do I need?
- Clean-ups done in conjunction with National Forest/BLM, all volunteer hours equal federal funds given to that district in the following year. Can you align with them for expanded impact?

Planning Process for organizing and hosting a cleanup event:

→ Next, get started with the planning.

NOTES

LOCATION

DATE

PERMIT ACQUIRED

TRASH DROP-OFF LOCATION

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

1 DECIDE LOCATION AND DATE

- **Establish a location in need of a clean-up. Things to consider:**
 - Have you been to the area yourself?
 - Are there multiple trash sites along a trail or one big area?
 - Do your trash sites need to be mapped to find them, or are they obvious?
- **Choose a target date for the clean-up.**
- **Contact Land Manager or local Parks and Rec (organization or individual) with intended purpose, gain approval and acquire permit.**
 - Permits are granted by the local land manager or municipality. Ensure you understand details like # max people, time window of permit, and other specific stipulations.
 - Ask if the Land manager is willing to sanction the event and join you in the effort. This is a big win, but not essential.

2 LOGISTICAL PLANNING PRE-EVENT

- **Choose a trash drop-off location:**

Every municipality is different, so do your homework. Definitely do not fill up your apartment alley dumpster or think you can get away with the one at your local strip mall. Don't do it. Call your town dump or local landfill and get the scoop. Here are a few questions to ask:

 - What is allowed/not allowed to dump there?
 - Discuss scale of clean-up and if they will donate vouchers for free dumping.
 - Discuss the possibility of onsite trash receptacles.

***We highly recommend contacting your local dump for information on these things. They often support local efforts and can provide services, vouchers, tow trucks, etc. It's worth the phone call!*

LOGISTICAL PLANNING PRE-EVENT [continued]

- **Equipment needed:**
 - Who is going to fund the equipment?
 - Will you need porta-johns (on a trailer)?
 - Do you need heavy equipment and what is permitted?
 - *Determine needs: dozers, backhoes, dumptrucks, cranes, tractors, etc.*
 - *Do you have an operator?*
 - Who will provide these items and the rig to tow small/medium size utility trailers to and from the cleanup site?
- **Notify and get support from medical and fire emergency personnel.**
 - Invite them to attend.
- **Seek out sponsored, donated, discounted amenities/goods that will encourage attendance (ie. food, give-aways, raffle prizes). Things to consider:**
 - Who do you know in the community that may help with this?
 - What brand contacts do you have?
 - **Pro Tip:** When you reach out for support, share your personal story about WHY this area is important to you and how this event will positively impact the community. Pull on heartstrings while demonstrating your dedication to the cause and your professionalism in event organization. This goes a long way!

3 MANAGING RISK WITH VOLUNTEERS: DRAFT A LIABILITY WAIVER

- **Sanctioned volunteer clean-ups will provide waivers and liability coverage by the land manager.**
- **If not sanctioned, here are some tips:**
 - Utilizing a waiver and release of liability and publicity release is a popular way for groups and organizations to manage any inherent risks with trail clean up work while also managing volunteer expectations and overall risk.
 - While onX can not give you legal advice regarding the use of a waiver, there are many examples online that may help your team develop its own liability waiver. The National Council of Nonprofits has some comprehensive information for managing the use of volunteers on its [website](#), including a downloadable [Sample Adult Volunteer Waiver](#) and a [Waiver and Release of Liability & Publicity Release](#). Stanford Law School also provides a sample [Volunteer Liability Waiver and Agreement](#), which includes publicity release and consent for medical care, among other terms, for use as an example through their Organizations and Transactions Clinic.
 - You and your team can also check out some more specific examples from different trail volunteer organizations for ideas on crafting a waiver. For instance, a few more concise and trail/park volunteer specific examples can be found from the [Park Alliance](#) in New York, and from the [Northwoods Volunteer Connection](#) in Minnesota.

4 PROMOTION OF EVENT

- **Create a Social media event page and then encourage the community to SHARE it. Things to include:**
 - Date, Time, Location, Parking information
 - What to bring
 - Amenities offered
 - RSVP process
- **Contact your county office, and include on their community event calendar.**
- **Promote to local clubs, outdoor recreation retailers, banks, churches, educational facilities, philanthropic organizations.**
- **Reach out to local media for event coverage and recap.**
 - **Pro Tip:** the media is often full of distressing stories. Give them something positive to talk about! Invite a reporter or writer. It's a great day on the job for them, exposure for you, and overall a win for the community.

NOTES

MEDICAL/EMERGENCY CONTACTS

SPONSORS

WAIVER

SOCIAL MEDIA

PROMOTION

5

FINANCIAL PLANNING PRE-EVENT:

Item	Cost	Notes
Dump Fees		
Rental Fees		Equipment, tools, haul vehicles
Trash Bags		How many do you need?
Gloves		How many do you need?
Refreshments for volunteers		Lunch, snacks, bebies?
TOTAL		Do you have enough funding or personal investment to cover this?

6

SUPPLIES TO BRING TO EVENT

- **Be sure to come prepared with supplies for safety and success.**

Personal Gear

- Work gloves
- Long pants and sturdy shoes
- Sunscreen
- Eye protection

Group Supplies

- Attendee sign-in sheet, clipboards, pens
- Waivers to be signed
- Trash bags and trash cans
- Trash pick-up tools
- Radios
- Tables, camp chairs, sun/rain shade
- Map of planned clean up area
- Medical supplies
- Hand sanitizer
- Cold Beer and water
- Raffle items and giveaways

NOTES

START TIME	END TIME
PARKING	
SIGN-INS	
MEDICAL GO-TO	
MC	
SUPPLIES COORDINATOR	
FOOD+BEVERAGES	
BASECAMP	
POUNDS OF TRASH HAULED OUT	

7

DURING EVENT

- **Develop a structure for how the event is organized:**
 - Determine a chain of command and delegate specific roles for event leaders based on team ability: parking, sign-ins, medical go-to, MC for introduction, supplies coordinator, etc
 - Identify a comfortable basecamp
 - Communicate hard timeline and rendezvous point
 - 3.5 hrs is the recommended max time for a clean-up
 - Have food, beverages, comfort, and “fun” ready to go when clean-up ends
 - Capture attendees contact info

8

POST EVENT

- **Tally up # pounds of trash hauled out.**
- **Celebrate the outcome on social media with a message of thanks to the community and sponsors.**
- **Give attendee sign-up sheet to local Forest Service/ BLM representative.**
- **Consider writing a report about the clean-up (how much was removed, how many were there, who supported it, how to get involved), and push it to your local media.**
- **Send out an email to attendees to ask for input, and reach out for future clean-up events.**
- **Send a note to becky.marcelliano@onxmaps.com to share your successes. We'll add you to our tally of cleaned-up trash and send you something as a token of appreciation.**