



Volunteers Are Needed For The Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative

April 16 2021 10:44 AM



Volunteers are needed for the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative. The Sierra Club is organizing three litter cleanup sites where they will track the amounts and types of plastics collected with the Marine Debris Tracker app as part of a larger initiative. The Alton event is from 9am-12pm on Saturday, April 17, 2021.

Working with volunteer citizen scientists from local communities, the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative is recording data on the state of plastic pollution along the river to generate a ‘plastic pollution map’ aimed at helping policymakers, businesses and citizens take action to reduce the problem. Different points show where data has been collected through April 25, 2021. As more people log debris data they find along the River, more points will be generated on the map.

“We are asking residents to join the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative to be a part of the solution to combat plastic pollution along the Mississippi River by helping to collect data on marine litter in Alton, IL,” said Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Co-coordinator for the Sierra Club. “Up to 80% of marine plastic originates on land, and rivers are a major route for plastic litter to be transported from inland communities to the ocean.”

The Mississippi River flows over 2,000 miles from its headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Items that we use every day - like disposable coffee cups, masks and plastic bags – can end up in the environment, making their way to our rivers.

Madison County Building and Zoning Department is supporting this effort by providing essential supplies like bags, gloves, safety vests, and guidance on how to use the Marine Debris Tracker App.

“I am thrilled with the Sierra Club’s cleanup efforts in Alton along the Mississippi riverfront and I’m glad that Madison County Building & Zoning with our Clean Communities litter cleanup supply program can be of assistance,” said Chris Doucleff, Madison County Building and Zoning Administrator.

Several larger coalitions are involved in this initiative, including the United Nations Environment Programme, National Geographic Society and the University of Georgia. Also in partnership is the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, which includes Alton’s Mayor Brant Walker.

Volunteers are asked to visit Sierra Club’s sign up page and confirm their plans to attend so adequate supplies will be available. The event can be found at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0b44aaab2aa0ff2-litter>

Participants are asked to make sure their cell phones are fully charged and to bring their chargers as the app uses a significant amount of battery. Masks are required.

The initiative is beginning with data collection in three pilot locations along the Mississippi River: Baton Rouge, Louisiana; St. Louis, Missouri; and St. Paul, Minnesota. As pilot locations, these cities are promoting education and outreach materials about plastics in inland waters and supporting local data collection events in their communities.

The official data collection dates are April 1st to April 25th, 2021 and the information obtained will be analyzed and included in a special report for the Mississippi Plastic

Pollution Initiative. However, The Sierra Club encourages residents to continue to use the Debris Tracker beyond those dates and to add information, as this will contribute to a larger global database on plastic pollution.

For more information, please see <https://1mississippi.org/plastic-pollution-initiative/>