



Sierra Club Plans Fall Litter Clean-ups And Plastic Pollution Data Collection

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ALTON - The Three Rivers Project of Sierra Club Illinois is calling for volunteers to support a multi-site litter clean-up to help rid the environment of debris that harms habitats, threatens aquatic life, pollutes our rivers, and endangers marine and coastal environments. The clean-ups, which will be held on Saturday, November 6 from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM, are critical to the Three Rivers Projects' work to protect the watersheds that are so important to our region. Learn more and register for the river clean-up at sierraclub.org/illinois/piasa-palisades/events.

The Mississippi River flows over 2,000 miles from its headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, and items that we use every day can make their way to our river, thus impacting the environment. In Alton, the Three Rivers Project partners with the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative (a project of the United Nations Environment Programme, National Geographic Society, and the University of Georgia) to tackle this issue. The local host, the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), is a consortium of mayors who reside along the ten main stem states up and down the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative records data on the state of plastic pollution along the river to generate a ‘plastic pollution map.’ This map helps policymakers, businesses, and citizens alike take action to reduce the problem. As more people log debris data they find along the Mississippi River, more points will be generated on the map.

“We are asking community members to join the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative to help combat plastic pollution along the Mississippi River,” says Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Co-Coordinator with Sierra Club Illinois. “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.”

This past year, the Three Rivers Project has held numerous clean-ups, most recently as part of the Mississippi Earthtones Festival River Clean Up on National Public Lands Day. That event brought 48 volunteers to the banks of the Mississippi River, where they boarded boats piloted by Grafton’s Beasley Brothers. The volunteers netted over a ton of trash and easily filled a 15 yard drop off dumpster, plus eight tires and a buoy.

“We can’t thank our volunteers enough for their work as citizen scientists,” says Christine Favilla. “With the help of our partners like the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and the Army Corps of Engineers, we have cleaned up more than 37 tons of trash from the islands and shores of the Mississippi River through the Mississippi Earthtones Festival’s Great River Clean-ups.”

The final Sierra Club sponsored cleanup in 2021 will be on Saturday, November 6. In order to keep volunteers and partners safe, a maximum number of volunteers will be allowed at each of the three clean-up sites. Participants should bring their own water bottle and wear boots or sturdy shoes. Organizers will provide trash bags, gloves, and safety vests. Please learn more and register to volunteer for one of the clean-up sites, listed below:

The Great River Road from Clifton Terrace Park
The Great River Road from Ardent Mills

Registration for these events can also be accessed at our website at sierraclub.org/illinois/piasa-palisades/events.

About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.8 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.