

How To Host a Community Event!

FIRST THINGS FIRST



Planning a cleanup or similar project in a natural area?

What should you do first?

- Find out who owns the property and ask their permission to organize the event.
- Call your local Conservation Authority (CA) *early on in the planning process and well in advance of the proposed work date* to find out if you need Conservation Authority *regulatory approval* to work in that natural area. CA staff can also provide advice on *any other regulatory approvals that may be required, any timing restrictions for in-water work in order not to disturb fish spawning habitat or migration, and how to undertake your project with the greatest positive impact on the environment as possible.* For more information please visit <http://www.conservationhamilton.ca/hca-regulation-permits> or call our Administration Office at 905-525-2181 and ask to speak to a Watershed Officer.
- Determine if there is insurance to protect volunteers, property owners and event organizers from liability in the event of an accident.



TIMING

Successful events are planned well in advance. Take the time to choose an appropriate date, make contacts and assign tasks. Aim for a confirmed date three months in advance of the event. The date should be confirmed with the property owner and partner agencies.

Spring is often the best time to work in natural areas – after the ground has thawed and after the spring runoff but before significant plants emerge. Earth Day is in April. Perhaps your project can be tied in to Earth Day activities.

However for work that involves a watercourse please contact the Hamilton Conservation Authority before selecting an event date. The Ministry of Natural Resources has different timing windows for watercourses across the watershed when no in water work can occur due to activities like fish spawning.

Events such as a clean-up are best held during the school year in terms of attracting more volunteers. Be specific as to timing if possible – e.g. from 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon as some parents drop off and pick up their children at the specified times.



COMMUNICATION

Communicate the information on your workday as soon as everything is confirmed. The longer the information is known, the greater the volunteer participation. Groups such as guides and scouts appreciate several months' notice so that they can include the event in their activities' calendar.

If it's possible to promote the event as a free, fun, family activity, do so. Children are good at garbage pick up and enjoy getting "down and dirty" with no-one complaining.

Prepare a flyer which provides information as to date, start and end time, precise location(s) to meet, what to wear (work gloves are important), work to be done and contact number for further information. To avoid disappointment or ill-will, it's recommended that the event take place "rain or shine" and this be indicated on the flyer. It is very hard to cancel at the last minute and reach all those unknown volunteers who learned of the workday and might show up to find there is no activity.

Deliver the flyer to as many homes in the area as possible. Put them up in local stores, offices, libraries, schools, MP, MPP and councillor offices. Local residents' associations may have a door to door or electronic delivery system to their residents available to you. Know your community. For some it is better to deliver approximately two weeks before the event otherwise the flyer is lost and the date forgotten. For others, earlier notice is better.

It may be possible to get someone to donate the paper and time at appropriate photocopying/printing equipment to produce the paper form. It is recommended coloured paper be used for the printed version as this stands out better in the household mail. The flyer can also be communicated electronically. Have information on the project included in as many websites as possible – local conservation authority, city/town, newspaper, residents' associations etc.

Provide the information to local newspapers. An article in the paper is great advertising. Send an electronic notice of the event to the newspapers two weeks in advance requesting inclusion. Invite newspapers to attend on the day for photos and a write-up.

**Greater Golden Horseshoe
'Sharing Environmental Experiences'
Workshop Organizing Committee**

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ON THE DAY

If the area to be cleaned up can be accessed from many entrances, it is helpful if a member of the organizing committee can be stationed at each entrance to provide the volunteers with information as to where to go, to hand out garbage bags and to advise where to take the filled garbage bags or larger items.

Wheelbarrows are a great help when moving heavy items.

Simple refreshments are welcomed by the volunteers and generate good will towards future clean-ups. Local coffee shops or restaurants might donate – donuts, coffee, fruit juice, water. (Remember to provide garbage bags, recycle bins as well as some means of hand cleaning such as hand sanitizer, wipes, paper towel.)

COMMUNICATION

Ask the local schools to include information on the event in their newsletters (printed and/or electronic) being sent home to families. Contact the principals of the local high schools to see if this project would count as "community hours" for the students. If it does, students should come with the appropriate school forms to be completed on the day with one or more of the organizers designated as the person to note the length of time the student participated and sign the form.

Contact the local guide, scout and any other known youth organizations in the area requesting they advise their leaders of the event. Guides and scouts do a great job at garbage pick up and their members are able to earn points towards their environmental badge by participating.

Take advantage of opportunities to advertise on local radio and TV programs. Mobile signs can be rented to advertise the event. It is possible that the local councillor, MPP or a business would sponsor it if asked.

If there is any chance syringes from drug use might be found, ensure that all children are told that if they see one they must get an adult to pick it up. Have a special box or container for any collected.

Be aware of other potential safety issues particularly if there is water in the area. Appropriate adult supervision of children is essential.



GARBAGE CLEAN-UP



If planning a significant garbage clean-up, contact the local municipality to see if it will provide the large garbage bags free of charge. The local councillor's office should be able to provide information on the appropriate staff/department to contact.

If it looks as though a waste disposal skip could be filled (or almost filled) due to the size of the items to be removed or the number of garbage bags that will be filled, it may be possible to arrange for a skip to be provided free of charge. Contact the local councillor's office for information on who to contact (at the City of Region). Arrange for the date, time and location for the skip to be delivered and the date it will be picked up.

For litter type garbage it is easier for volunteers to fill small plastic bags such as the shopping bags from local food stores first and then put a number of them into the larger bags.

If organizers are unable to provide a large number of used shopping bags, ask the local supermarket if they will donate.

Make sure there is a clear understanding between your organization and the local municipality as to what is to be done with all the collected garbage - where it should be left and who will remove it.

If the above suggestions are not applicable, then the flyer should indicate volunteers should bring their own bags. Disposal must still be taken care of.

