



HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY

Connecting Communities—Connecting Nature
from the foothills to the plains

INDEPENDENT CLEANUP TOOLKIT

*Become a steward of the Canal today and make a lasting and positive impact on your 71-mile
greenway.*

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Independent Cleanups Supported By:





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INTRODUCTION

The mission of the High Line Canal Conservancy (Conservancy) is to preserve, protect and enhance the 71-mile-long High Line Canal in partnership with the public. As one of the nation's longest and most cherished urban trails, the High Line Canal (Canal) not only connects various communities and people to nature but serves as an important ecological corridor. It is home to a vast array of species of flora and fauna ranging from beautiful and iconic cottonwood trees to playful foxes.

The Conservancy leads various trash cleanups along the Canal to elevate the level of care for our beloved Canal while connecting people to nature and educating the community about the negative impacts of trash in the environment. To expand our collective impact, the Conservancy supports an Independent Cleanup program to encourage community members like you to take a lead role in stewarding the Canal. This Independent Cleanup toolkit is a resource highlighting the importance of cleaning up waste from the environment, how trash negatively impacts ecological resources like the Canal and how to execute a cleanup successfully and safely on your own. **With this Independent Cleanup Toolkit and resources provided by the Conservancy, you can more easily become an environmental steward of the Canal, ensuring the plants and wildlife of the Canal thrive, while keeping the greenway safe and clean for all people to enjoy.**



Photo credit: Evan Anderman





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About the Independent Cleanup program

The Conservancy's Independent Cleanup program gives community members the ability to actively participate in enhancing the ecological health of the 71-mile Canal and learn about the importance of environmental stewardship. It is an opportunity for groups and Canal enthusiasts to help improve and elevate the level of care for the Canal. This independent volunteer program offers flexibility to choose the location, time, and date of their trash cleanup. Individuals and groups are then able to steward the Canal on their own with resources provided by the Conservancy. Together, we can make an everlasting positive impact on the health of the Canal for generations to come.



Environmental Benefits of Trash Cleanups

The Canal is not only a recreational corridor but an ecological resource for the region – one that connects different environments from the foothills to the plains, each environment dictating a unique set of plants and wildlife. Too often, trash makes its way into our natural resources such as trails and open spaces, negatively impacting the ability for flora and fauna to thrive, and the Canal is no exception. As the Canal's utility function transitions from an old irrigation delivery utility to a stormwater management system, the numerous environmental benefits of collecting and properly disposing of trash that has made its way into the environment is more important than ever. By removing trash from the Canal, you are helping combat significant environmental issues such as:

Harm to Wildlife: The Canal is home to a variety of wildlife such as big horn sheep, bears, birds of prey, foxes, and deer to name a few. Most of the trash found in the Canal is made up of plastic, metal and glass, items that take hundreds of years to break down. A plastic water bottle can take around 450 years to break down. As an ecological corridor, the trash found in the Canal can be mistaken for food by wildlife and obstruct their digestive system or wildlife can get entangled and trapped.





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Water Pollution: As trash breaks down, toxins can leach into the soil and contaminate the water supply that is absorbed by plants and wildlife that live along the Canal. Toxins leached from trash can inhibit the growth of plants, poison wildlife, and pollute local water supply. By working together to remove trash from the Canal, we allow the Canal to better function as a stormwater filtration system thereby protecting local watersheds and the waters of the state.

Harm to Communities: Over 350,000 residents live within a mile of the Canal and the Canal serves more than 1 million users annually, making the Canal a popular recreation site. The trash that accumulates in the channel not only negatively impacts the local environment but can also negatively impact human health. The trash found in the Canal can attract unwanted rodents and pests that carry diseases that are harmful to our health.





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STEPS TO GET INVOLVED

1. Review this Independent Cleanup Toolkit and FAQs.
2. Register your cleanup [online](#).
3. Ensure all members of your group complete the online [Volunteer Waiver](#) prior to the cleanup.
4. Gather your cleanup supplies. We can provide supplies such as bags, gloves, and trash grabbers if needed. Contact volunteer@highlinecanal.org if you would like to borrow supplies.
5. Clean up the Canal! (Bonus: Take a photo of your cleanup and tag us on social media #CanalSteward #CarefortheCanal).
6. Weigh the trash you collected (scale provided with borrowed supplies), record the number of volunteers who participated, how long you cleaned for, and how far you cleaned in miles.
7. Submit your cleanup metrics to our online [Canal Cleanup Card](#).





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GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL CLEANUP

Before your Cleanup

Prior to your cleanup, be sure to review the following items to get your cleanup started.

Register for the program

If you are interested in the Independent Cleanup program, please register online. By registering, the Conservancy can track the number of volunteers participating in the program and track areas of the Canal that have been cared for. Please note: When you register, you're registered for the program for a calendar year and will not need to register again for each individual cleanup, therefore you only need to register once per year even if you plan to do multiple cleanups. You can register individually or as a group.

Check for trail updates

The Conservancy works closely with Denver Water and the 13 jurisdictions along the path to improve the trail as a place for people and protect the natural habitat for vegetation and wildlife. Projects along the trail include enhancements such as new navigational signage, Canal-wide initiatives such as tree care, as well as more significant infrastructure projects such as roadway underpasses and stormwater projects. Before you head out to the Canal, please visit highlinecanal.org/trail-improvements/ and highlinecanal.org/trail-notices/ for the current status of all the major projects along the 71-mile greenway.

Select a location

Identify areas of the Canal that could be cleaned that are safe and accessible. If you are flexible on your cleanup location, please contact the Conservancy at volunteer@highlinecanal.org for suggested locations of the Canal that need stewardship.





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Gather your supplies

The basic cleanup supplies needed are gloves and trash bags. Gloves such as work gloves or gardening gloves are highly recommended as they are sturdier compared to single use nitrile gloves and can be reused multiple times, reducing the amount of waste you are creating during your cleanup. Be sure to bring any other personal items you may need such as water, snacks, sunscreen, and hand sanitizer. Additionally, if you have a fish or luggage scale (a scale with a



hook) you can use it to weigh the trash you have collected and accurately submit the pounds of trash removed from the Canal during your cleanup when submitting your cleanup totals.

The Conservancy can provide trash bags, work gloves, a scale, buckets, and trash grabbers for participants if wanted. Borrowed supplies need to be returned within two weeks of check out. If you would like supplies, please schedule a time to pick up your cleanup supplies at the Conservancy's office by emailing volunteer@highlinecanal.org.

If you are interested in picking up litter along the Canal trail repeatedly, we are happy to **permanently give you free cleanup supplies**. Please email volunteer@highlinecanal.org to ask about supply gifts.

Review the Safety Procedures

Keeping our volunteers and Canal users safe is our top priority. Please read over the full safety procedures found in Attachment A to ensure you have a fun and safe cleanup. Additionally, be sure to share the safety procedures with anyone joining you. If you encounter an encampment on your cleanup, please avoid the area and report this to the Conservancy and/or local governing agency. For emergencies, call 911. For concerns about the trail or activity on the trail, contact the local governing agency.





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Submit your Volunteer Waiver

All participants must sign and submit a [Volunteer Waiver](#) to the Conservancy prior to your first cleanup. Waivers should be submitted online through SmartWaiver, linked above. Individuals under the age of 18 must have a parent/guardian signature. Volunteer Waivers must be completed in entirety. If you are registered as a group, the individual who registered the group is responsible for sharing the online waiver.

During your cleanup

Distribute supplies

If others are joining you, be sure to distribute the cleanup supplies and ensure that all participants have gloves for the cleanup. For safety purposes, trash should never be picked up with bare hands.

Secure the trash

Be sure that the trash collected is properly secured in the trash bags so that trash cannot leak out.

Document your cleanup

Photos are a great way to document your accomplishments. To help us track the cleanups and communicate the importance of this program, please consider the following:

- Take a before and after photo of the cleanup site as well as a final photo of all the trash that was removed from the Canal.
- Record your accomplishments of your cleanup by weighing the amount of trash collected. If you do not have a scale to weigh the trash collected, you can document the number of trash bags collected.
- Record the number of volunteers who participated, how far you cleaned, and how long you spent cleaning.





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After your cleanup

Properly dispose of trash

Because this is an independent cleanup, participants are responsible for disposing of the trash collected during their cleanup. **Trash bags are not to be left on the trail.** Trash bags can be disposed at any on-site trail trash cans (not available in all locations) or if near a park, at an on-site dumpster.

For large Independent Cleanup efforts, the Conservancy can ask the local jurisdiction for support in removing the trash after the cleanup. Please ask us about this option when registering cleanups in areas with large amounts of trash.

Share on social media

Follow the Conservancy on social media and tag us in your accomplishments! Sharing your experience and accomplishments from your cleanup is a wonderful way to help spread the word so that others may become stewards of the Canal. It is also a meaningful way to highlight the progress being made on the Canal.

Be sure to use the following hashtags: #71miles #HighLineCanal #CanalSteward

[Facebook](#) @HighLineCanalConservancy

[Twitter](#) @COHighLineCanal

[Instagram](#) @HighLineCanal

Submit your cleanup totals

After each cleanup, fill out the [Canal Cleanup Card](#) online. By submitting your Canal Cleanup Card, the Conservancy can gather important data from each independent cleanup. Additionally, the Conservancy can track where along the corridor is the Canal being cared for.





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CANAL STEWARD RECOGNITION

The Conservancy offers stewardship recognition on our website for individuals and groups who complete the Canal Steward recognition requirements. Canal Steward recognition requirements are listed below:

- Register for the Independent Cleanup program
- Submit all necessary volunteer waivers for yourself or your group members
- Submit your Canal Cleanup Card online





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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does the Conservancy supervise Independent Cleanups?

No, the Independent Cleanup program is a unique program that allows individuals to organize a cleanup that fits into their schedule and perform that cleanup independently with resources provided by the Conservancy. If you would like a Conservancy representative to join the cleanup to share info about the Canal and Conservancy or support volunteers during the event, please reach out to us and we can see if any of our Volunteer Leaders are available.

Are cleanup supplies provided?

The Conservancy can provide the necessary supplies for your cleanup which includes trash bags, work gloves, trash grabbers, buckets, and a scale.

What do I do with the trash collected?

Participants are responsible for properly disposing of any trash collected during their independent cleanup. Full trash bags can be disposed of at any on-site trash can (please ensure it is not overflowing) or nearby park dumpster. **Trash bags are not to be left on the trail.** If you have any questions, please contact the Conservancy.

Can I get volunteer hours verified?

Yes, if you submit your volunteer waiver(s), Canal Cleanup Card, and before/after photos of your cleanup. If you need community service hours, please email volunteer@highlinecanal.org.

Do I need to submit a waiver for each independent cleanup?

No. For the Independent Cleanup program you only need to register for and sign a Volunteer Waiver once per calendar year.

Who do I contact for questions?

If you have any questions regarding the Independent Cleanup program, please contact volunteer@highlinecanal.org.





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ATTACHMENT A: SAFETY PROCEDURES

Volunteer safety is a top priority for the Conservancy. It is important to practice safety measures such as being aware of your surroundings, knowing your location and cross streets, and avoiding touching hazardous materials. Please review the following safety procedures and share them with your group before your cleanup.

- Wear appropriate clothing such as sturdy, closed-toed shoes and long pants.
- Bring additional essentials you may need such as sunscreen, personal medication, water, snacks, and a hat.
- ‘Know before you go.’ Various trail enhancements and projects are underway along the Canal. Be sure to check the Conservancy’s trail improvements and trail notices pages to see if there are any trail projects or detours that may conflict with your cleanup:
 - highlinecanal.org/trail-improvements/
 - highlinecanal.org/trail-notice/
- Always wear gloves when stewarding the Canal. You can wear your own gloves such as gardening or work gloves. We can also provide gloves for volunteers.
- **Do not touch needles, syringes, mattresses, couches, or other hazardous items.** If you come across any hazardous materials please take a picture, note your location on the Canal and notify the Conservancy.
- Do not approach, disturb, or remove items from homeless encampments, regardless of their level of activity. Please notify the Conservancy of where these camps are located.
- Do not touch dead or injured animals.
- Participants are highly encouraged to always have a cell phone on hand in case of emergencies. **Dial 911 in case of an emergency.**
- Please report any injuries to the Conservancy.

