



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT A RIVER CLEANUP



The Mississippi River was literally Chad Pregracke's backyard while growing up and where he worked as a commercial shell diver during the summers of his teen years. Typically working miles away from home, he camped on the islands and shorelines of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. It was during this time Chad began to realize how neglected the rivers were, with the unsightly and toxic accumulation of trash along their banks. At the age of 17, he started making calls to government agencies to notify them of the problem. Year after year passed by and the problem only worsened. In 1997 Chad decided, if no one else was going to clean up the river, he would; one river, one piece of garbage at a time. In 1998 at the age of 23, Chad founded Living Lands & Waters. Today, the organization has grown to include a full staff and fleet of equipment.

Since the project's inception, Chad, his crew, and over 108,000 volunteers have worked on 24 rivers, in 21 states and have removed 9.9 million pounds of debris from U.S. Waterways. Most recently, Chad expanded the mission of the organization to include educational workshops, The MillionTrees Project, Adopt-a-River Mile, Invasive Species Removal, and The Great Mississippi River Cleanup.

Most river cleanups last about two hours and begin with a brief discussion on safety and potential hazards during the cleanup. From there, volunteers load up into LL&W work boats, piloted by the LL&W crew, and head out to the pre-designated garbage sites along the shorelines and islands of the river. Once there, the search for garbage is on. With trash bags and shovels in hand, volunteers scour the area in search of plastic bottles, barrels, tires, appliances, and other debris which is then carted to a centralized location. After the site has been cleaned, everyone loads back up into the boats, and heads back to enjoy lunch and a tour of the LL&W barge (lunch can be provided before or after the cleanup depending on the time of the event)



## A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Remember we'll be outside and getting dirty! A few suggestions of what to wear or bring: Boots or old athletic shoes - Long pants - Loose clothing for hot weather - Layers of warm clothes during early spring or late fall cleanups - Hat - Sunglasses or protective eye wear - Do not wear open-toed shoes, shorts, or dangling jewelry - Refillable water bottle

Also, there are certain risks involved with participating in a river cleanup event. You may want to reconsider if: You have a heart condition - You are pregnant - You are highly allergic to poison ivy, bee stings, etc. - You have back or knee issues - Low tolerance for extreme cold or high heat and humidity - If you still wish to participate and suffer from any of the above conditions, you must bring all necessary medicines such as EpiPens, nitroglycerin pills, Benadryl, etc.

We will provide you (unless you wish to bring your own) with gloves, life jackets, drinking water (please bring a refillable bottle if you'd like), sunscreen and insect repellent.

