



Georgia Becomes National Leader in Statewide Beautification
100% of Georgia Counties Participate in the 2009 Great American Cleanup

ATLANTA (May 18, 2009) – Each March through May, people nationwide volunteer their time to collect trash and beautify their communities’ thoroughfares, parks and waterways during the Great American Cleanup. This year, Georgia has joined an elite group of states that can boast 100 percent participation from their counties. In 2008, only Tennessee achieved the perfect participation status.

More than 300 organizations are participating in the Great American Cleanup throughout Georgia’s 159 counties. Organized statewide through the Keep Georgia Beautiful program and implemented locally through area Keep America Beautiful Affiliates, civic organizations and local governments, this demonstration of citizen involvement highlights the pride and commitment that Georgians have for their state.

Fifty-eight thousand Georgians volunteered to pick up 2,450,298 pounds of trash in 2008, and organizers are on track for a similar result in 2009. That’s the equivalent of picking up seven-hundred 3,500-pound automobiles or more than thirty 80,000-pound tractor trailers in just 90 days.

“Georgians are proud of our state, and we’re thrilled that the number of volunteers for the Great American Cleanup has increased from 39,000 in 2005 to 58,000 in 2008. What’s even more incredible is that the amount of trash that has been picked up in the same time period has dropped from more than 4.5 million pounds to just over 2.5 million pounds,” said Lynn Cobb, manager of Keep Georgia Beautiful. The increase in volunteers and simultaneous reduction in litter pick-up is attributed to Georgians taking a more active role in litter prevention and year-round clean-up activities.

Georgia’s Annual Litter Report

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ Annual Litter Report from FY 2007-2008, the leading source of roadside litter on both urban and rural roadways is from improperly secured trash and loads. This ‘accidental littering’ accounts for 66 percent of all litter in Georgia. The remaining 34 percent of trash comes from deliberate littering or illegal dumping.

“The type and amount of litter that volunteers pick up across the state is staggering,” said Scott Carroll, the Georgia Department of Natural Resource’s 2009 Investigative Ranger of the Year. Carroll, through the state’s litter prevention initiative, trained 500 code and law enforcement officers on litter enforcement in 2008.

“The number of old tires, cigarette butts, cups and bottles, and other types of garbage that are cleaned from Georgia’s creeks, lakes and trails never ceases to amaze me.” continued Carroll.

“We only have one Georgia, and we all have a responsibility to care for it.”

In addition to harming Georgia’s natural beauty, litter diminishes water quality, leads to increased costs to treat water for public consumption, and harms or kills wildlife.

Adopt-A-Highway

Georgia DOT’s volunteer-based Adopt-A-Highway program helps maintain Georgia’s natural beauty by collecting nearly 8,800 bags of trash each year from Georgia’s roadways.

“The volunteers of the Adopt-A-Highway program actively remind their fellow Georgians that we are all stewards of the land,” said Bill Wright, landscape architect manager for the Georgia DOT. “Adopt-A-Highway volunteers make a profound impact on our state, but litter prevention should absolutely be our first line of defense in keeping Georgia beautiful. We must keep litter in its place so that it does not end up mixing with Georgia’s lands and waterways.”

“It may be easy to think that a candy bar wrapper or a soda can doesn’t make a difference,” said Carroll. “But just as individuals make up our communities, you have to look at the collective impact of litter on Georgia. It’s the collective nature that really causes the damage.”

Rivers Alive

What Georgia DOT does for Georgia’s thoroughfares, Rivers Alive does for the state’s waterways. Each fall, the nonprofit organization brings together Georgians to clean rivers, streams and lakes around the state. Some of the groups that made a significant impact in 2008 and are anticipated to return with similar ambitions in 2009 include:

- Employees from Georgia Power, who picked up 60,000 pounds of trash from six different lakes;
- Keep Brunswick-Golden Isles Beautiful, who coordinated more than 20 groups picking up 12,100 pounds of trash along the Intracoastal Waterway;
- The employees of Eastman Kodak who, along with local schools, picked up 1,500 pounds of trash along the Chattahoochee River;
- Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful volunteers, who removed 152,000 pounds of trash from the Flint River; and
- Columbus Help-the-Hooch which cleaned 153,052 pounds of trash from the Chattahoochee River and area creeks and streams.

“Whether it’s accidental or intentional, each one of us has to be more conscientious about litter because it has a profound impact on Georgia’s beauty, wildlife and natural resources,” said Cobb. “Georgians have clearly been taking a proactive approach to keeping our state clean, and we need to keep that positive momentum.”

For more information on how you can get involved in each program, please contact them directly.

Great American Cleanup/Keep Georgia Beautiful

“Litter. It Costs You.”

www.keepgeorgiabeautiful.org

www.litteritcostsyoudo.org

404-679-4940

Adopt-A-Highway
Georgia DOT
www.dot.state.ga.us
404-631-1387

Rivers Alive
www.georgiaadoptastream.org
404-675-6240

About *Conserve Georgia*

The *Conserve Georgia* program was developed to foster a culture of conservation throughout the state of Georgia. Nearly a dozen state agencies and authorities are working together with businesses, civic leaders, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and residents to make Georgia's land, water and energy resources more sustainable now and for generations to come. The program's Web site – www.conservegeorgia.org – serves as a portal to help Georgians find information on a wide range of conservation resources and programs.

#

Contact:

Matt O'Connor, McRae, 404.917.0675 or moconnor@mcrae.com
Stephanie Milo, McRae, 404.917.0682 or smilo@mcrae.com
Sarah Dearman, *Conserve Georgia*, 404.463.2092 or sarah.dearman@dnr.state.ga.us

30 Ways You Can Keep Georgia Beautiful*

Prevent Litter

- Pick up a piece of litter each day.
- Throw trash in the can.
- Keep those truckloads covered.
- Join your friends in annual cleanups.
- Become a good example for others by not littering.
- Spread the word, litteritcostsyou.org, health, beauty, safety and money.

Reduce Waste and Recycle

- Buy only what you need to use.
- Reuse it or donate it before you through it away.
- Recycle. Recycle. Recycle.
- Buy products that have been recycled.
- Compost your yard trimmings and leftover food.
- Take your own re-useable bag to the store.
- Choose and recycle compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Protect Water Resources

- Recycle your used motor oil properly.
- Conserve a valuable resource: water.
- Keep storm drains clear of debris.
- Build a rain barrel.

Beautify Your Surroundings

- Beautify with native trees and plants.
- Erase graffiti from your neighborhood.
- Adopt a local spot or roadside to help beautify.
- Help protect our beautiful greenspaces.

Improve your Community

- Teach your children to love the earth.
- Build an outdoor classroom for a local school.
- Participate in your community's conservation efforts.
- Make new friends – join a carpool.
- Encourage local businesses to get involved.
- Educate your community leaders.
- Participate in a KGB* project.
- Support your local Keep America Beautiful Affiliate.
- Support Georgia farmers' markets.

*Keep Georgia Beautiful