

STAKE OUT YOUR CLEANUP TERRITORY

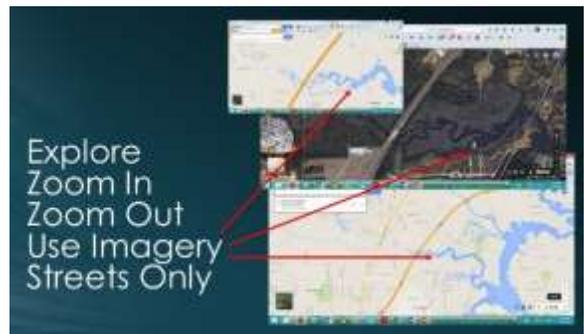
When you start cleaning up a strange thing happens, you see trash everywhere. And for a time it feels so overwhelming that you may even stop picking up trash. You are not alone. Another thing that can happen is that folks will give you all kinds of great information AFTER you have decided on your plan of action. What's the antidote? Stake out your boundaries, research the history of trash in your territory, and decide in advance what is going to make you feel successful in year one, year two and year three. This gives you manageable expectations. Follow these three easy steps to staking out your cleanup territory:

STEP ONE: PRINT OUT SOME MAPS AND GET YOUR CLEANUP DREAM TEAM TOGETHER

I love maps! They give me that bird's eye view of everything and everybody in my cleanup program. There are complex maps with many layers of information and there are simple maps that you can create using Google maps or even a paper street map from the Welcome Center. Your first map is just an outline of your physical cleanup territory. This may be a whole community, a small neighborhood or a waterbody.

Maps are brilliant tools for getting your team involved. When you pull out a map, people automatically find their homes, family, routines, businesses and more. People who never gave a thought to the trash or how it can flow into the local waterbodies will be inspired when they see it on a map. This is the best way of grounding your cleanup campaign in facts so that the work stays fun and easy!

"Maps are like campfires – everyone gathers around them, because they allow people to understand complex issues at a glance, and find agreement about how to help the land," Sonoma Ecology Center.



STEP TWO: START ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF TRASH IN YOUR TERRITORY

Now look for all the litter cleanup work that has come before you and that is going on in your community. Even though it may feel like nothing is happening, generally there is a lot of action. You are looking for historical records and photos, other cleanup organization reports, environmental studies, etc. "What else do you know about this?" is definitely a question you want to ask your team and community members. Share your findings with the cleanup community via #itsinthebag so that we are fully up to date too.

Do you have to read all the studies and reports? Will they all impact your work? No but you capture the information in your records because it may become useful someday. If you have it handy then you don't have to go back and find it again. This work can save you tremendous time and money allowing you to focus on doing more of what you love to do.

STEP THREE: DRAW YOUR BOUNDARIES ON YOUR MAPS TO STAKE OUT YOUR TERRITORY

Now you are ready to stake your claim. You've gotten input from the team about sustainable boundaries. You know what other groups are taking on and the history of trash. Take a deep breath and know that you are making a difference! You may still see trash everywhere – but this is your territory!

Got more questions?

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