



Focus

Who's Who in Litter Pick-Up

Do you ever wonder who picks up litter on our highways, roads, parks and other public areas? Many people assume “they’re prisoners.” Actually, there are many different types of crews dedicated to picking up litter and cleaning up illegal dumps. The following are a few that have partnered with the Department of Ecology to work towards a zero litter goal.

Ecology Youth Corps

The Department of Ecology Youth Corps (EYC) is Washington state’s largest youth employment program. Every year, more than 400 teens are hired statewide. These youths provide an important service to their community while earning an hourly wage. They gain valuable job skills, teamwork experience, safety awareness and an environmental education. EYC crews have been picking up litter for more than 26 years, averaging over 1 million pounds a year. They are not juvenile delinquents!

There are two types of EYC crews: youth and median crews. Summer youth crew members range from ages 14 to 17 and pick up litter along the shoulders of state and county roads and recreation areas, such as parks and boat launches. Median crews are comprised of young adults 18 years and older and are responsible for cleaning the more challenging roadway areas, such as medians, complex interchanges and high traffic areas.

Adopt-a-Highway

The Adopt-a-Highway program is an anti-litter roadside enhancement campaign intended to build pride in our beautiful state. It allows organized groups to work in partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) by “adopting” a section of state highway and agreeing to help take care of it. A majority of the groups are volunteers: members of clubs, employees of a business, or concerned citizens. Private sponsors may also participate by hiring professional contractors to accomplish the litter control and/or roadside enhancement.

In return, the WSDOT erects a sign(s) at the beginning of the road section identifying the adopting group. It also provides volunteer groups with the necessary traffic control equipment, safety equipment, safety training, litterbags and disposal of filled bags.

Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

In addition to administering the Adopt-a-Highway Program, the WSDOT has primary responsibility for picking up litter along state roads. WSDOT personnel pick up litter directly and they pick up the bags of litter collected by any group working on state roadways, mainly the Ecology Youth Corps, Department of Corrections, Adopt-a-Highway groups and some Community Litter Cleanup Program crews.

Community Litter Cleanup Program

Through the Community Litter Cleanup Program (CLCP) the Department of Ecology provides funding to local governments for litter pickup, illegal dump cleanup and litter prevention education. Local governments have wide latitude to use partnerships with other agencies and groups to get work done. The CLCP funds a wide variety of crews including youth and adult volunteer crews; juvenile rehabilitation crews; and state and local correctional crews, which are comprised of both community service and offender crews. In 2000, CLCP crews picked up 4 million pounds of litter and illegally dumped materials.

Department of Corrections Community Service & Work Crews

Instead of offenders idly sitting in jail, many are out working in their communities providing visible evidence to citizens that offenders are being held accountable and are making reparation. This arrangement benefits the offender by avoiding time in jail, learning work habits and possibly establishing a work ethic. It benefits citizens by diverting tax dollars from jail costs and it benefits the work site by providing free or low-cost labor. Corrections crews significantly contribute to litter and illegal dump cleanup programs statewide. In 2000, crews funded through an agreement with the Department of Ecology picked up almost 1 million pounds of litter and illegally dumped materials. In addition, many crews participate in the CLCP as described above. Crew members are carefully screened before they are allowed to participate and are supervised by a correctional officer.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Correctional Camps

The Correctional Camps Program is a partnership between the Department of Corrections, Department of Social and Health Services and DNR. The program provides workforce training and practical work experience for adult inmates and juvenile offenders. Through the program, DNR provides a supervised, trained and equipped labor force for emergency response, stewardship activities on public lands and special projects for local communities within Washington state. The Department of Ecology has an interagency agreement with DNR to deploy crews from facilities around the state. The crews focus on removal of illegally dumped materials from state-owned forests, as well as other forest maintenance tasks. In 2000, DNR crews picked up more than 300,000 pounds of litter and illegally dumped materials from state lands.

Parks & Recreation Commission, Volunteer Program

The Parks & Recreation Commission has an interagency agreement with Department of Ecology to conduct waste reduction, recycling, and litter control activities in state parks. Most litter collection is done by park rangers and volunteers. Funding from Ecology offsets the costs of equipment, supplies and disposal of materials collected.

References

More information can be found at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter. If you need materials in an alternative format, contact Michelle Payne at (360) 407-6129 or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).