



Partnering

Planning

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Rincon Institute



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Local agencies host cleanup along regional creeks and washes on Saturday, May 24

Local citizens will band together later this month to tackle litter in conjunction with National River Cleanup sponsored by American Rivers. The Tucson community will conduct region-wide litter pick-up on May 24 in some of the region's most precious creeks and washes.

Several local agencies are coordinating efforts to signify the importance these desert waterways.

Regional cleanup events include: Cienega Creek hosted by Pima Association of Governments and the Cienega Watershed Partnership; Rincon Creek hosted by the Rincon Institute, and Atterbury Wash and Lakeside Park hosted by the Tucson Clean & Beautiful Adopt-a-Wash program. In addition, each event is being assisted by the University of Arizona program, the "Master Watershed Stewards".

Across the country, a series of community-based stream cleanups are happening, with several opportunities in Arizona. During the cleanup in 2007, about 600 tons of garbage was removed by tens of thousands of volunteers from rivers in the United States. This popular annual event raises public awareness of the magnitude of trash accumulating in our nation's waterways.

At Cienega Creek, just southeast of Tucson, the Cienega Corridor Conservation Council hosted a 2007 cleanup where they removed over 20 large bags of garbage.

"We all know how precious water is to our community and the importance of keeping it clean," said Mead Mier, watershed planner for Pima Association of Governments. "Each one of these groups is excited to gather volunteers and pitch in to protect our washes and creeks for future generations. Cienega Creek, for example, is important to our community because the perennial portion is designated one of just 22 Outstanding Arizona Waters. It contributes significantly to the Tucson region's natural groundwater replenishment and is recognized by the

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Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan as one of the region's most important wildlife corridors."

According to the Arizona Riparian Council, riparian areas are very important to Arizonans because they are so rare (less than 2 percent of the total land area) but they are also critical for the survival of 60 percent to 75 percent of our wildlife species. B.J. Cordova, at Tucson Clean & Beautiful, said, "Our local waterways are a key area of concern of ours in the cleanup and beautification/restoration realm." Through the Tucson Regional Creek and Wash Cleanup Day, the hosting organizations hope to bring awareness to local creeks and washes and to include more locations in the future. The Tucson Clean & Beautiful Adopt-a-Wash program has over 140 different wash opportunities available around town. Five of these are adopted so far in the growing program. Oro Valley also has a growing Adopt-a-Wash program, and some of the Pima County Adopt-a-Park projects include wash ways, such as the Rillito River.

The cleanup events offer a chance for people to enjoy the unique waterways our desert has to offer and to make an impact on their protection and health.

To sign up to help at a cleanup and find out more information visit <http://www.americanrivers.org/cleanup> and search for Arizona events. Or, if you plan to clean up your own wash or organize your own event, you can register it on the Web site. Or visit www.PAGnet.org.

"It's thrilling to see so many people across the nation pitching in to protect their local river or favorite stream," said Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers, the organization that sponsors National River Cleanup. "We applaud the work in the Tucson region, not just for speaking out about their waterways, but for taking action to keep it healthy." American Rivers is a national non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting and restoring healthy natural rivers for the benefit of communities, fish, and wildlife.

Pima Association of Governments is an association of local, state and tribal governments with a mission to build consensus among its members and the public on regional planning for transportation, air quality and water quality. PAG's staff gather and analyze data, provide accurate information, and coordinate an open and cooperative planning process to promote good decision-making for the region. Please visit www.PAGnet.org for more information.