

Media Release



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

September 13, 2019

For More Information:

Debbie Szpanka
Public Information Officer
Town of Bluffton
20 Bridge Street
Bluffton, SC 29910
(Office): 843.706.4534
(Cell): 843.540.2274
(Email): dszpanka@townofbluffton.com

Additional Event Resources:

(Website): <http://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov> (Town of Bluffton)
(Website): <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/carolinaclear/regional-consortiums/lsp/index.html> (Lowcountry Stormwater Partners)
(Facebook): Town of Bluffton Government
(Facebook): Lowcountry Stormwater Partners – We are Neighbors for Clean Water

31st Annual Beach Sweep/River Sweep Saturday, September 21st

The Town of Bluffton, Lowcountry Stormwater Partners, South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources invite all greater Bluffton residents and business owners to participate in the 31st Annual Beach Sweep/River Sweep on Saturday, September 21st from 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. The event will be held at the Oyster Factory Park on the May River (63 Wharf Street). This is the 31st year this statewide event has been held and the 12th year in which Bluffton has participated. Thousands of volunteers across the state participate annually in this event, which is South Carolina’s largest one-day, volunteer, litter clean-up of beaches, marshes and waterways.

“This annual statewide event, held the third Saturday each September, gives every one in our community an opportunity to contribute to the health of our beloved May River and our surrounding waterways,” Mayor Lisa Sulka said. “It warms my heart every year to see hundreds of people pick up trash and debris throughout Bluffton in an effort to honor our river, which is the centerpiece of our Town and our lifestyle.”

Beth Lewis, River Sweep event coordinator and the Town's water quality program administrator, said these events help create a sense of community as they educate residents about town and regional resources.

"The Town is very grateful for such an involved community whose residents share their concern and care for the May River," Lewis said. "Beaufort County's waterways are rich in marine life and greatly contribute to the Lowcountry culture. This event provides residents an opportunity to be environmental stewards of our most cherished natural resources."

Coffee /Lunch/Supplies Provided for Volunteers

The Town of Bluffton encourages all individuals, families, friends, schools, youth groups, civic groups, conservation groups and businesses to volunteer for a few hours to clean the river and roadsides which drain to the river.

Corner Perk will be providing a cup of their May River Blend coffee before the event and the Hardeeville and Bluffton Walmart stores will provide free lunches to volunteers.

Necessary supplies including gloves, bags, sunscreen, and water will be provided by event partners. Just bring yourself and wear comfortable clothes and appropriate shoes.

Litter pickup will be taking place around the Historic District and on the May River. Marshgrass Adventures, The Outside Foundation, and Outside Hilton Head and local kayak club members will be assisting with cleanup efforts on the water. If you'd like to participate with your own boat or kayak please arrive by 8:30 a.m. to allow time for setup.

Each local volunteer becomes a citizen-scientist and records data about the type and amount of litter they collect. This data is tabulated, added to South Carolina's statewide data and is incorporated into the Ocean Conservancy's worldwide data. This cumulative data provides crucial information on the sources of litter so communities can better identify and target anti-litter education.

If you need more information about the event, please contact Beth Lewis, water quality program administrator, with the Town's Watershed Management Division at (843) 706-4559 or via email at blewis@townofbluffton.com. Registration is not necessary however, please notify Lewis if you are bringing a community group or organization so the event can plan for special projects and an adequate quantity of supplies.

Event Partners

The Town of Bluffton and the County-wide stormwater education consortium, Lowcountry Stormwater Partners, thank all local and regional partners who make this event an annual success. Partners include: Hardeeville Walmart, Bluffton Walmart, Corner Perk, i2 Recycle, Waste Management, Marshgrass Adventures, Outside Hilton Head, the Outside Foundation, Port Royal Sound Foundation, Coastal Conservation League, Keep Beaufort County Beautiful, the Beaufort County Solid Waste & Recycling Division, Palmetto Pride, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), and South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium.

In an effort to make the Town's cleanups as sustainable as possible, i2 Recycle will be recycling the suitable debris collected. Waste Management will be providing a waste disposal bin for items that cannot be recycled.

Since 1988, the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources have organized this annual event. The Beach Sweep/River Sweep takes place in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup, coordinated by the Ocean Conservancy. The Ocean Conservancy tallies all the debris data from each location worldwide. The data helps those in charge of environmental protection to identify the sources of litter so they can make recommendations which may help prevent and reduce the amount of litter polluting our waterways.

In addition to the Cleanup, several organizations, such as Lowcountry Stormwater Partners and the Port Royal Sound Foundation will have educational displays about how to improve water quality in our local watersheds, including the May River Watershed. The Town of Bluffton will be providing a free gift for all volunteers.

About Lowcountry Stormwater Partners: Striving for healthy, fishable, swimmable waterways.

A Neighbors for Clean Water initiative began as a project of the Town of Bluffton with the goal of educating and motivating residents to be responsible and do their part to clean up the May River and surrounding watersheds in greater Bluffton. The initiative began with support from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Recognizing the importance of having an education program that would share common goals and messages, Carolina Clear, the Town of Bluffton, Beaufort County, the Town of Hilton Head Island, the City of Beaufort, and the Town of Port Royal came together to form the Lowcountry Stormwater Partners – We are Neighbors for Clean Water. The objective is to reach and educate all of our citizens in Beaufort County and to continue our joint efforts to protect our precious waterways.

If you are interested in keeping up to date on the latest Lowcountry Stormwater Partners news, please follow our work on Facebook and sign-up for the Changing Tides, our monthly e-newsletter. Visit <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/carolinaclear/regional-consortiums/lsp/index.html> to learn more.

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