

# Project Category

## NSBF Byway Community Award: Event

The Delaware River Scenic Byway is also home to the D&R Canal. Walkers, bikers, and birders use the towpath to the canal. In contrast, this river area is used for recreation by a commercial tubing operation and a bike and kayak rental operation. The NJ Clean Communities Annual Delaware River Cleanup is a true partnership between local and county governments, state park services, and a nonprofit partner, the Delaware River Greenway Partnership. This is a 13-mile byway managed by volunteers in New Jersey.

# Project Name

## NJ Clean Communities Annual Delaware River Cleanup

# Byway Name

Delaware River Scenic Byway

# Overview

New Jersey municipal and county leaders with the support of NJ State Park staff started a desperately needed cleanup in 2017 on and along the banks of the Delaware River in Hunterdon County, NJ. The event is hosted along thirteen and a half miles of the Delaware River Scenic Byway. This partnership event is a huge undertaking involving multiple sponsors. Partners provide supplies, planning guidance, staff, funding, transportation, first aid, and garbage/recycling disposal services. Centered at three primary locations, each with four identified areas to cleanup, the event is planned with a safety first mentality. Besides offering training for volunteer leaders each year, the 2020 event was reorganized to allow core volunteer groups to work with appropriate COVID safety precautions in place.

There is great enthusiasm for this event with approximately 150 land-based volunteer slots filled weeks in advance. (There are also volunteers who go out on boats and canoes to collect garbage on the river too; even Pennsylvania Park staff join in.) To ensure volunteers are working safely, they are asked to wear long pants, gloves and sturdy shoes. This year masks were also required. Registration times for each location were spread out to allow for social distancing. In past years, coordinators had the luxury of not planning for social distancing. They were able to allow volunteers to work side by side, take transportation together and even enjoy a lunch and conversations with fellow volunteers after the cleanup.

A diversity of groups participated in 2020 including groups from schools, scout organizations, individual families, and religious institutions. For those who did not register in time for the cleanup, groups of volunteers went out on their own and worked in other locations along the Byway on the day of the cleanup.

The 2020 event was recognized with a Rise to the Challenge Award, by the NJ Clean Communities Council for helping to reduce litter exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. This is very significant since river communities along the Byway experienced extreme litter problems (even improperly disposed of human waste) from the onslaught of visitors to the area. Sleepy communities were seeing thousands more visitors compared to years past, so the cleanup made a huge difference to maintain the appearance of the Byway. The results were impressive with over 100 bags of garbage, 20 tires and many large pieces of debris collected.

## Intrinsic Qualities

While the Delaware River Scenic Byway embodies all the intrinsic qualities of a National Scenic Byway, its primary qualities are scenic, historic and recreational. The annual byway cleanup enhances its scenic and recreational qualities by removing accumulated trash and debris from the banks and shore of the Delaware River in selected locations.

It is normal for undesirable debris of natural and human origin to be washed to the river carried by streams and sheet flow during rain or snow melt. In some areas, this debris accumulates to the degree it is unsightly from the road and river corridor and detracts from the byway's attractive scenic qualities, such as tangled branches, boards with exposed nails, scraps of tarpaulin with rope, and plastic bottles. This year, many unsightly tires were collected in addition to "regular" trash. Other items impede recreational activities blocking walking access along the riverbank or compromising the ability of canoes, kayaks, and tubes to navigate the river by blocking the banks and shallows, creating safety hazards. Helping return the area to its more "natural" state contributes to maintaining the qualities of the Byway.

By organizing and executing the byway cleanup as a supervised volunteer oriented event, items that degrade the scenic qualities of the Delaware River, its corridor and viewshed are removed. This improves safety for recreational activities as well. Much of the Delaware River mainstem is visible from the Delaware River Scenic Byway, especially when vegetation is not fully in leaf so it is important to maintain the area in its natural state not cluttered with litter and trash. Further, by directing volunteers to sites along the banks of the river, they see the Byway from a new perspective and learn of the recreational opportunities available to them in the area. Many return to the scenic Prallsville Mills, Bulls Island Recreational Area and Holcombe Jimison Farm, all host locations for registration and jumping off points for the event.

## Partners

Partners include:

- Local Municipalities
- Hunterdon County
- NJ State Parks
- PA DCNR (The Pennsylvania Park Service)
- NJ Clean Communities Program
- Delaware River Greenway Partnership

The cleanup was a true partnership between local and county governments, state park services and a nonprofit partner, the Delaware River Greenway Partnership. Each entity played an active role and had specific responsibilities. Some provided supplies, others provided garbage trucks and staff to support the work. The County provided busing to shuttle volunteers. The NJ Park Service and local municipalities provided staff to coordinate the whole event and to oversee onsite check-in and supply distribution. Delaware River Greenway Partnership handled the promotion and the online registration portal including a participant waiver. Organizing all of these groups and executing all the tasks involved many planning meetings. Especially with the pandemic, reorganizing the cleanup to address social distancing during the trash collection, in transporting volunteers, and interactions at registration, required a massive team effort.

## Byway Best Practice

The Byway is not only home to the Delaware River but the D&R Canal. The towpath to the canal is used by walkers, bikers, and birders. This area of the river is widely used by a commercial tubing operation and a bike and kayak rental operation. Recreational tubers, bikers, kayakers, fisherman and canoeists are all enjoying the river corridor and the views. Helping keep this region clean makes the outdoors experience for all these users and visitors a more positive experience. Maintaining the appearance of the Byway, also contributes to a positive experience for day trippers visiting small historic towns, those staying at local bed and breakfasts and boutique hotels, and visitors coming to attend weddings and special events hosted along the Byway.

# Key to Success

The annual event is a success due to thoughtful planning and execution along with the support of local news outlets who help promote the event. The biggest key to success is the ongoing support of the general public wanting to help the environment and help maintain a beautiful and clean byway.

## Additional Information

### Contact Information

Stephanie Fox Staff Member  
NJ D&R Canal State Park  
(609) 397-2949, [Stephanie.Fox@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Fox@dep.nj.gov)

Kathy Klink  
Staff Member, Delaware Twp, NJ  
609-397-3240, ext. 208  
[kklink@delawaretwpnj.org](mailto:kklink@delawaretwpnj.org)

### Project Year(s):

Started 2017– Present (Now An Annual September One-Day Event)

### Website

[Delaware River Scenic Byway](#)

# Photographs

