RIVER ACTION DAY
INFORMATION BOOKLET
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1. Introduction to the Friends of the Chicago River

Friends of the Chicago River is the only organization solely dedicated to the Chicago River. Our mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals.

Friends creates healthy river habitat, an accessible river people can use and enjoy, and a river cared for by a broad group of supporters. To do so, Friends organizes direct volunteer action days, partnering with municipalities, businesses, community groups, schools, peer organizations, and government agencies covering the entire 156-mile Chicago River system and its surrounding watershed.

Friends’ engages our community in many ways. We support teachers through the Chicago River Schools Network. We play a key role in changing how the City of Chicago and other municipalities treat the river by advising planning initiatives, leading to river-edge improvements including riverwalks and riverside parks. And in 2006, Friends opened the seasonal McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum on the Chicago Riverwalk to provide a better understanding of the dynamic relationship between Chicago and its river.

Through dedication, coordination and inspiration, Friends is making the Chicago River a haven for wildlife and a treasured community resource.
2. River Action Days (RADs)

Though the river is continually improving, it still needs help. Poor water quality, invasive species and degraded habitat are some of the problems which require our attention.

Where do volunteer groups come in?
To address these issues, Friends of the Chicago River organizes volunteers from businesses and community groups to improve the health of the Chicago River. We offer customized river restoration volunteer days for businesses tailored to the needs of the location, the time of year and the capacity of the volunteer group. The strong relationships we maintain with our partners ensure the volunteer groups are contributing their efforts to the stewardship priorities of each location in coordination with the site stewardship plan.

River Action Days are valuable to the community, helping to restore and protect the Chicago River while giving participants a chance to make a difference through engaging, hands-on work. Friends’ RADs provide benefits to your group as well; they build team spirit amongst participants, increase staff loyalty, and strengthen your company image in the community.

River Action Days are completely planned and executed by our professional staff — all your team has to do is show up and have fun!

Testimonials from River Action Days attendees:

“We had a great time, really enjoyed the day. Good call on doing two different activities, it was nice to break it up like that. Good mix of education and work. Everyone was really nice.”

“As part of our ongoing relationship with Friends of the Chicago River, MillerCoors truly valued River Action Day as a great opportunity for employee engagement and to help the local environment. Our staff enjoyed the variety of activities, including working alongside and even in the river, and making a difference in the community.”
3. Activity Descriptions

There are a wide variety of activities possible at different sites which help to restore and maintain natural habitat in and around the Chicago River:

- Removal of harmful invasive and non-native plants from riparian areas adjacent to the river such as buckthorn
- Removal of garbage and debris throughout natural areas and parks
- Native seed collection and sorting for future planting
- Brush pile burning of harmful invasive species
- Gully fixing: removing buckthorn to allow in sunlight and plant native plants to repair gully areas where erosion is damaging the river ecosystem
- Spreading mulch to suppress weeds and maintain soil moisture
- Planting of native plants
- Maintenance of nature trails or other natural areas

In addition, we organize extra activities that can be a great attraction for participants:

- Guided canoe trips at accessible points along the river (extra charge)
- Monitoring the health of the Chicago River by collecting and observing macroinvertebrates, or “bugs”, in the river
- Using simple water quality testing kits to determine the river’s chemical makeup, testing for pH, turbidity, total dissolved solids
As nature has its own life cycle, not every activity is possible at every part of the year. Table below shows time accessibility of particular activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>TIME OF THE YEAR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Removal of harmful plants</td>
<td>anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckthorn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic mustard</td>
<td>spring-summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet clover</td>
<td>summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox tails</td>
<td>summer-fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiflora rose</td>
<td>anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honey suckle</td>
<td>anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trash collection</td>
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<td>3. Seed collection</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Brush cutting</td>
<td>anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mulching</td>
<td>spring-fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Planting</td>
<td>spring-summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gully fixing</td>
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<td>8. Tree ID</td>
<td>spring-summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Nature trails maintenance</td>
<td>spring-fall</td>
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<td><strong>SPECIAL ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Macros</td>
<td>spring-fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Canoes trip</td>
<td>spring-fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Chemistry testing</td>
<td>spring-fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Wildlife Encounters</td>
<td>anytime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Site Locations

**Forest Preserves of Cook County:**

- **Skokie Lagoons** - Tower Road Boat Launch, Winnetka
- **Somme Woods** - Dundee Rd, Northbrook
- **Blue Star Memorial Woods** - Harms Rd, Glenview
- **Clayton Smith** - N. Caldwell Ave and N. Tonty Ave, Niles
- **Edgebrook Woods VRC** - 6100 N. Central Ave, Chicago
- **Forest Glen** - 5420 N Forest Glen Ave, Chicago
- **LaBaugh Woods** – Interstate 94 and Foster Ave.
- **Whistler Woods** - 480 Acme Dr, Riverdale
- **Kickapoo Woods** - W. 144th St and Halsted Ave, Riverdale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Preserves of Cook County</th>
<th>Number of volunteers possible</th>
<th>Invasive plant removal</th>
<th>Litter pick up</th>
<th>Seed collection</th>
<th>Brush cutting</th>
<th>Macro-invertebrates</th>
<th>Gully fixing</th>
<th>Canoe trips</th>
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Map of Forest Preserves of Cook County RAD Locations

Follow this link for an interactive map
**Chicago Park District:**

- **Gompers Park** – 4222 W. Foster Ave, Chicago
- **Legion Park** – 3100 W Bryn Mawr Ave, Chicago
- **River Park** – 5100 N Francisco Ave, Chicago
- **Ronan Park** – 3000 W Argyle St, Chicago
- **Thillens Park** – 6404 N. Kedzie Ave, Chicago
- **Ping Tom Park** – 1700 S. Wentworth Ave, Chicago
- **Canal Origins Park** - 2701 S Ashland Ave, Chicago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chicago Park District Location</th>
<th>Number of volunteers possible</th>
<th>Invasive plants removal</th>
<th>Litter pick up</th>
<th>Tree Mulching</th>
<th>Woodchip trails maintenance</th>
<th>Canoe trips</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Map of Chicago Park District RAD Locations

Follow this link for an interactive map
5. Sample volunteer day schedules

Sample 3-hour Volunteer Day (50 people)

9:00 a.m.   Arrival, collect waivers, group photo
9:15 a.m.   Overview of Friends, Chicago River history, and volunteer day goals.
9:30 a.m.   Rotation 1
            Group 1: Removal of invasives, maintenance of landscape
            Group 2: Macros and litter clean-up
10:45 a.m.  Rotation 2
            Group 1: Macros and litter clean-up
            Group 2: Removal of invasives, maintenance of landscape
11:45 a.m.  Return supplies and wrap up
12:00 p.m.  Departure

Sample 5-hour Volunteer Day (50 people)

9:00 a.m.   Arrival, collect waivers, group photo
9:15 a.m.   Overview of Friends, Chicago River history, and volunteer day goals.
9:30 a.m.   Rotation 1
            Group 1: Removal of invasives
            Group 2: Maintenance of landscape (mulching, weeding, etc.)
            Group 3: Macros
10:30 a.m.  Rotation 2
            Group 3: Removal of invasives
            Group 1: Maintenance of landscape (mulching, weeding, etc.)
            Group 2: Macros
11:30 a.m.  Rotation 3
            Group 2: Removal of invasives
            Group 3: Maintenance of landscape (mulching, weeding, etc.)
            Group 1: Macros
12:15 p.m.  Lunch
1:00 p.m.   Big group litter obliteration
1:45 p.m.   Return supplies and Wrap up
2:00 p.m.   Departure

* Actual rotation activities may vary depending on the number of volunteers, current ecological conditions, the site needs, and the goals identified on the management plan and restoration calendar for the workday site.
6. Pricing information

We offer through preparation and execution of volunteer days for various groups:

| 1 – 25 people | base price | $2000* | 1 – 3 activities | 1 site |
| 26 – 50 people | base price | $2750* | 2 – 5 activities | 1 or more sites |
| > 50 people | each person over 50 | $25 | 2 – 5 activities | 1 or more sites |

*Groups who participated in a River Action Day within the past 2 years receive a 10% discount

This price includes:

- Logistic preparation
- Site scouting and preparation
- Staff time/expertise
- All necessary base materials: tools, gloves etc.
- Insurance

Additional activities pricing:

Canoe trip (available only on Skokie Lagoons, River Park and Ping Tom Park):

| 0-6 canoes | 0-10 people | $550 | base price |
| > 6 canoes (max. 12) | 11-24* people | $45 | each person over 10 |

*We can accommodate groups over 24 people if canoeing in shifts

Wildlife Encounters

| Mammals | 30 or 45 minute session | Prices vary* |
| Raptors | 30 or 45 minute session | Prices vary* |
| Reptiles/Amphibians | 30 or 45 minute session | Prices vary* |

*Pricing depends on length of session and location

Add-ons:

- Plants/Mulch/additional materials - TBD
- Lunch - $15/per person
- Snack - $5/per person
7. Process and Payment Schedule

1. Initial conversation to discuss business activity interests, number of participants, ideal dates, locations.
2. Friends’ Associate contacts possible partners to coordinate activities, work day leaders and materials.
3. Secondary conversation to communicate specific RAD opportunities and decide on details (location, date, activities).
4. Friends’ Associate draws up RAD contract and initial deposit invoice and sends to business.
5. Business returns signed contract with $550 non-refundable deposit, 30 days prior to the workday.
6. Friends Associate draws up final invoice, at businesses discretion to pay final invoice before or no later than 30 days after RAD workday.

8. Contact information

For more information please contact:

**Annette Anderson**
Volunteer and Events Associate
(312) 939-0490, ext. 14
e: aanderson@chicagoriver.org