

# Rapid Trash Assessment

## HOW TO DO A RAPID TRASH ASSESSMENT

Assign Group Member Roles:

- ◆ High Water Line Person (this person searches for trash, and picks it up)
- ◆ Low Water Line/ Stream Bed Person (this person searches for trash, and picks it up)
- ◆ Recorder (this person will hold the surveys, and document trash the others find it)

Do the Assessments:

- ◆ Do the “Rapid Trash Assessment Scoring” and document your results, Circle your site’s rating 0-3.
- ◆ Do the “Trash Tally” and document your results. Make sure to look under plants and rocks.
- ◆ Analyze & Interpret Your Data with your group.
- ◆ Compare Results with other sites, or compare to see if there is change over time.

Pick up the trash:

- ◆ Avoid: hazardous waste, or unidentifiable waste.
- ◆ If there are strong currents or waves, do your assessment from a safe distance

## Rapid Trash Assessment Scoring

Rating System:	Optimal (score: 3)	Sub-optimal (score: 2)	Marginal (score: 1)	Poor (score: 0)
<b>Level of Trash</b> On first glance of the area I see...	No visible trash.	Little trash visible.	Trash is evident at first glance.	Trash distracts the eye.
<b>Trash that is a threat to Aquatic Life</b> (things that are toxic, items that can float and be mistaken for food)	Observable trash is mostly paper or wood products or other biodegradable materials.	Little or no trash. Some persistent, buoyant, small litter or debris.	Medium prevalence of litter that is plastic.	Large amount of toxic materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pesticides</li> <li>• batteries</li> <li>• medical waste</li> <li>• cigarette butts</li> </ul>
<b>Trash that is a threat to Humans</b> (toxic chemicals, things with bacteria, viruses, sharp edges, and long-standing water)	Observable trash contains no evidence of a direct threat to humans.	Trash contains sharp objects that might puncture someone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• broken glass</li> <li>• metal debris</li> </ul> Trash contains standing water where mosquitoes can reproduce (i.e. inside a tire or bucket).	Presence of standing water and/or one of these hazards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hypodermic needles</li> <li>• medical waste</li> <li>• diapers</li> <li>• pet/human feces</li> <li>• pesticides</li> <li>• batteries</li> <li>• light bulbs</li> </ul>	Presence of more than one of these hazards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hypodermic needles</li> <li>• medical waste</li> <li>• diapers</li> <li>• pet/human feces</li> <li>• pesticides</li> <li>• batteries</li> <li>• light bulbs</li> </ul>
<b>Trash that has been Dumped</b> (these items were brought and left behind)	5 items or less of litter that was carried downstream from another location.	Some evidence of littering on site.	Litter is in the water and along the shore, and includes a large item that had to have been driven there.	Significant litter on shore or in the water. Evidence of chronic dumping, and more than one large item.
<b>Trash that has Accumulated</b> (has been brought from elsewhere by water or wind - silt marks, faded, or decomposing)	No trash has been transported by water. If there is trash it appears to be directly deposited.	Less than 5 pieces of trash have evidence that they have been transported there by water.	5 to 20 items of trash are carried to the location by water. Often these are found at high water mark.	More than 20 items have been carried to the area by water.

Submit your findings to [friends@chicagoriver.org](mailto:friends@chicagoriver.org)

# Trash Tally – Data Collection

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As you go along, tally up the number of items that you find in each category.

Collect any trash that does not pose a risk to you.

<p><b>Plastic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic Bags</li> <li>• Plastic Bottles</li> <li>• Bottle Caps</li> <li>• Cigarette Filters</li> <li>• Cup Lid/Straws</li> <li>• Six-pack Rings</li> <li>• Thin Wrappers</li> <li>• Fishing Line</li> <li>• Hard Plastic Packaging</li> <li>• Styrofoam (Polystyrene)</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Biodegradable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper</li> <li>• Paper Bags</li> <li>• Cardboard</li> <li>• Food Waste</li> <li>• Yard Waste</li> <li>• Leaf-litter Piles</li> <li>• Landscaping Waste</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Biohazard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Waste</li> <li>• Used Diapers</li> <li>• Medical Waste</li> <li>• Pet Waste</li> <li>• Syringes or Pipettes</li> <li>• Dead Animals</li> <li>• Pesticides/Herbicides</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Metal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bottle Caps</li> <li>• Auto Parts</li> <li>• Aluminum Foil</li> <li>• Wire</li> <li>• Aluminum or Steel Cans</li> <li>• Metal Pipe Segments</li> <li>• Pots and Pans</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>
<p><b>Glass</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glass Bottles</li> <li>• Broken Glass</li> <li>• Dishes</li> <li>• Mirrors</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Large Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appliances</li> <li>• Furniture</li> <li>• Tires</li> <li>• Cars</li> <li>• Bags of Trash</li> <li>• Sport Equip.</li> <li>• Shopping Carts</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Construction Debris</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete Blocks</li> <li>• Rebar</li> <li>• Bricks</li> <li>• Wood Debris</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>	<p><b>Fabric and Cloth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthetic Fabric</li> <li>• Natural Fabric</li> <li>• Carpeting</li> <li>• Other (write-in) _____</li> </ul> <p>Tally: _____</p>
<p>All other items</p>			

## Analyze Your Data (...and share it with Friends of the Chicago River)

Rapid Trash Assessment	Score (0-3)
Level of Trash	
Threat to Aquatic Life	
Threat to Human Life	
Trash That Has Been Dumped	
Trash That Has Accumulated	
<b>Total:</b>	
<b>Average:</b>	

\*You could also compare weight or volume of the items for comparison.

Trash Tally	# of items found*
Plastic	
Biodegradable	
Biohazards	
Metal	
Glass	
Large Items	
Construction Debris	
Fabric and Cloth	
<b>Total:</b>	

Submit your findings to [friends@chicagoriver.org](mailto:friends@chicagoriver.org)