



## **Welcome to the Watershed Brigade!**

You are receiving this email either because you have already participated in a Watershed Brigade cleanup event or you have expressed interest in joining our team.

We are reaching out to provide an update on our plans continue working with you and to develop the Watershed Brigade program.

Our goals are to:

- Build an active community of local volunteers that will work together over time to keep our local watersheds and beaches clean;
- Encourage exploration of our local watersheds;
- Conduct outreach to build community stewardship;
- Provide opportunities for Brigade volunteers to get involved in special monitoring, and restoration projects over time.

## **Commitment and Participation**

There is no minimum requirement for anyone to be a Watershed Brigade volunteer, however we do hope that you engage with our group regularly through social media posts, online meetups, and by doing regular cleanups of areas in your neighborhood and the locations (i.e. river, creeks, trails, beaches, swimming holes) you recreate in.

## **Points, Challenges, Contests, Achievements, and Rewards**

We plan to reward participation by implementing a point-earning program. Points will be earned by logging hours of community service. We also plan to provide opportunities to earn points by participating in challenges and contests over time. Challenges may range from working to collect a certain amount of litter, hiking litter out of backcountry areas, or activities such as taking a selfie or photo of family/friends recreating in a local watershed area.

Points primarily earn oneself recognition as a stellar member of our community working to keep our waterways clean! However, points will also eventually allow volunteers to earn certain rewards (i.e. swag, gift certificates, opportunities to attend Channelkeeper volunteer appreciation events, raffle entries etc. We plan to eventually provide an opportunity to earn digital "badges" honoring volunteer achievements (i.e. over 10 different creeks cleaned up, over 40 hours of service, etc.).

## Community Service Credits

As a 501(c)3 environmental organization, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is qualified to sign off on community service requirements for educational purposes. We encourage students and families to participate in Watershed Brigade activities to earn community service credits.

## How to Participate

There are several ways to volunteer and to help Channelkeeper document your volunteer effort and watershed conditions.

- Spend time removing litter from the watershed and report your efforts back to Channelkeeper.
- Survey local watershed sites and post observations of sites that need cleanup attention.
- Conduct outreach to community members recreating at popular swimming holes.
- Document recreational use of creeks, rivers, and swimming holes and report your observations to Channelkeeper.
- Participate in future special challenges and restoration and monitoring opportunities.

## Cleanup Kits

Channelkeeper will provide trash bags and latex safety gloves for volunteers upon request. Kits can be picked up from Santa Barbara or Ojai locations. Please email [Molly@sbck.org](mailto:Molly@sbck.org) for further details.

## Reporting

Reporting your volunteer effort is critical. One of our primary goals is to build community around the principle of stewardship. Your efforts to keep our watersheds clean are an inspiration to others and the more that you report your effort, the more that others are inspired to join in. Also, Channelkeeper specializes in long term water quality monitoring, and the data that we collect can be used to identify and prioritize community and government efforts to reduce pollution at its source.

In the future, Channelkeeper hopes to develop a mobile app that can readily accommodate simple reporting and tracking of your volunteer effort.

In the meantime, we ask that volunteers report their efforts in one of two ways:

1. Report by posting to our Facebook group: *SBCK Watershed Brigade*
  - a. Simply post a photo of the litter you have collected and removed.
  - b. Include a brief written description of the date, time, and location.

- c. Estimate the weight of trash removed.
- d. Write the approximate amount of time volunteer cleanup activities took.
- e. We require all volunteers to follow all social distancing and safety guidelines adopted by State and local public health officials. **All volunteer photos posted on the SBCK Facebook group must show volunteers wearing facemasks!**  
Channelkeeper strives to set a responsible example for the community in this regard. Photos depicting volunteers without proper facemask coverings will be removed while such requirements are in place.

2. Send an email with all the information listed above to [Molly@sbck.org](mailto:Molly@sbck.org).

## Scoring

Volunteer service earns points when your activities are reported to the SBCK Watershed Brigade Facebook group or emailed to Channelkeeper. Points are tallied by the following method. This point structure may be modified over time. Updates on additional ways to earn points will be added over time. A more detailed description of these listed point-earning activities is provided below.

- Removing litter – 10 points for first half-hour (30-minute minimum, 2.5 points per each additional 15-minute increment)
- Reporting recreation monitoring results – 5 bonus points
- Conducting outreach – 2 bonus points per individual
- Posting a location where cleanup activities are needed – 5 bonus points

## Activities

### Litter Removal

Litter is one of the most pervasive water quality problems affecting the planet, and our local waterways are no exception. We need your help to keep our watersheds clean. All litter on the landscape has the potential to eventually make its way to the ocean. You can help be a part of the solution and keep our local watersheds clean and healthy by volunteering to pick up litter.

You can pick up litter from anywhere – your neighborhood, a local park, a local trail, a creek bed, the river bottom, highway turnouts next to the river... anywhere! However, to earn points, you must spend a minimum of 30 minutes from a selected area.

Litter must be self-packed out and disposed of properly. Do not leave accumulated/bagged litter in the environment.

### Monitoring Recreational Use in Watersheds

We plan to develop a robust recreational monitoring protocol for future use. Monitoring recreation in our local watersheds helps us establish the recreational value of clean watersheds.

Recreational monitoring can also aid land and public resource managers working to manage and prevent impacts caused by overuse. Our goal is to promote responsible access and recreation within public open spaces and parks.

For the time being, you can help us establish baseline trends in recreation by documenting the number of individuals that you observe recreating in the area you visit. Please note the date, time, area, and number of individuals you observe and include this information in a post to the *SBCK Watershed Brigade* Facebook group.

Please make a special note of individuals that you observe swimming or wading in creeks and rivers.

For now, we are NOT tracking recreation at local beaches.

### **Identify Areas for Targeted Cleanup**

Often when we are out and about, we observe areas in our watersheds where litter has collected, and cleanup activities are needed. Simply photograph and post a detailed description of the location and estimated amount/type of litter in an area to the SBCK Watershed Brigade Facebook group, or email Molly@sbckorg. Your observations will help guide volunteer effort so that we can be as effective as possible collectively.

### **Conducting Outreach**

Many visitors to our local watersheds may lack awareness about environmental impacts caused by littering. Watershed Brigade volunteers are leaders in our community who set a positive example by actively working to clean up our watersheds and by engaging with other community members in positive affirmation of environmental stewardship. The outreach script below is one way that Watershed Brigade volunteers can engage in outreach. **Please note that the Watershed Brigade is not “policing” behavior.** Our outreach goal is only directed at raising awareness about the impacts of litter in our watersheds and enabling others to do their part by joining in cleanup efforts.

## **Safety Guidelines**

- Please follow all applicable social distancing guidelines.
- Volunteers must wear masks and gloves.
- Only individuals or family/household units may participate as a group in the same locations.
- Always maintain social distance of 6 feet or more between yourself and others.
- Only engage in conversation with visitors if you feel comfortable.
- Do not confront visitors, even if you see illegal or irresponsible activity.
- Call 911 to report any emergency. FYI – Though irresponsible and impactful, littering is not a justification to call 911.
- Be courteous and respectful always while participating in the Watershed Brigade.

## Homeless Encampments

Homeless Encampments are one of the most significant sources of litter in our local watersheds. However, the Watershed Brigade is not targeting homeless encampments for cleanup. **Do not approach or remove any items from homeless encampments.** Cleanup projects in areas with active homeless encampments require special coordination and resources to protect health and safety and should be coordinated with local public officials. If you would like to report litter in any area due to a homeless encampment, please email Molly@sbck.org.

## Outreach Guidelines

We ask that volunteers not engage in dialogue with visitors about Coronavirus, swimming hole or trail closures, other Channelkeeper programs and initiatives, or any other controversial topics. We are not “policing” recreational areas or behaviors. **We are ONLY there to help contribute to minimizing the litter problem.**

We do encourage volunteers to engage with visitors to our local creeks and rivers about the need to keep our waterways clean in a friendly and positive manner. Below is a sample greeting that you may consider using to communicate with visitors:

“Hi there, I’m so-and-so. I’m a volunteer for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper. We are a group that works to keep our rivers and streams clean.

Since the COVID closures went into place, we are seeing a lot of increased visitation to this location, and unfortunately we are seeing a lot more littering than usual so we are saying hello to people today just to politely remind people to please pack out everything that they brought in.

Can I offer you a trash bag?

I also have gloves that you could use if you’d like to help pick up any other litter that you see. It would be a huge help if you could pick up anything else others have left behind. Please do not pick up any sharp objects or other potentially dangerous items.

(If the conversation is going well you could maybe ask where people are visiting from.)

Well, have a great day, and thanks so much for helping keep our creek/river clean”

### Things to avoid

Social distancing requirements and closures of public recreation areas are controversial topics, and Channelkeeper defers to public health officials about these matters. Channelkeeper is also

not working to enforce closures in place. **Our sole purpose in this endeavor is to make a positive contribution by minimizing littering impacts to our waterways.**

If broader issues are raised regarding Covid-19, or any of Channelkeeper's other work, please avoid debating or commenting on these matters on Channelkeeper's behalf. We recommend that you respond by providing them with Channelkeeper staff contact info. You could say something like:

"I understand your concern. Let me give you a card if you would like to speak with someone at Channelkeeper about that. I am only here today to help keep litter out of the creek/river/park."

Finally, please avoid picking up needles, sharp objects, broken glass, toilet paper, human waste, etc. Use extreme caution and be wary of traffic and your surroundings.

**Your health and safety is our number one priority.**

**In case of urgent questions please contact  
Channelkeeper staff for support:  
Ventura River Watershed - Ben Pitterle – 805-636-6189  
Santa Barbara/Montecito/Carpinteria – Molly Troup - 603-236-9262**

**Thanks to YOU for helping to make a difference  
during the pandemic by keeping our waterways clean!**