

Wed, 17-Mar

Volunteers sure to get lunch, entertainment and satisfaction Saturday cleaning the May.

Get out and clean it up. The May River is a mess and we made it that way.

Somewhere along the line, all of us are responsible for the condition of our environment and Saturday is the one day our community strives can make a united and concerted effort to work on at least one piece of it.

The idea of gathering to remove trash from the water began in 2001 when Friends of the Rivers, a local environmental group, joined with the town in a river cleanup project. That cooperation has continued and expanded to include other public and private groups, as well as concerned individuals.



“This is the most important community event annually in the town of Bluffton,” said Nancy Schilling, founding director of Friends of the Rivers. “It’s a very unique partnership amongst the private sector and government to become stewards about what we care about most, which is the land and the water.”

The 10th annual May River Cleanup, a Great American Clean up affiliated event, will take place from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday at the Oyster Factory Park at Bridge and Wharf streets. Gloves, bags, sunscreen, bug spray, water, snacks and lunch will be provided. If you have a boat or kayak to use or to lend for the day, bring them at 7:30 a.m.

The park itself is an example of environmental cooperation between Beaufort County and Bluffton, according to Schilling.



“The best way to preserve water quality is to preserve land” near water bodies, she said.

Although no one knows exactly what they’ll find this weekend along the May’s banks or in its waters, Schilling said there will be at least one dock section and one boat that volunteers plan to bring ashore for disposal.

“We’ve done such a good job lately that what we’ve been finding is mostly things that fall off of docks and blow off boats,” she said. “We’ve always had the assistance of Outside Hilton Head bringing kayaks for people to use. We encourage people to bring their own kayaks and canoes if they like and we do need people in power boats to collect trash from people in kayaks and bring it back to the docks during the time we’re there.”



The trash collected will be hauled by Beaufort County Public Works to Dumpsters donated by Waste Management, which in turn will take them for free to the Piney Hill dump. Other groups involved will include Palmetto Pride, Beaufort County Recycles, the Clemson Extension Service, American Rivers and the Bluffton Rotary Club.

There will also be an educational display of EnviroScape, a “found art” project; representatives from the Bluffton Police Department’s Community Oriented Policing Program; and the Bluffton Township Fire District.

Once the work is done, volunteers will be treated to barbecue sandwiches from Larry and Tina Toomer of the Bluffton Oyster Co., entertainment by the duo “The Irene Goodnight Group,” and free tote bags instead of T-shirts bearing the Friends of the River’s new brand “River Smart,” which will be introduced for the first time publicly on Saturday.

More than 10 tons of trash have been removed from the river during the past nine cleanups.

If anyone knows of large objects that need to be removed — like docks or boats — call Kim Jones, environmental protection manager in the Office of Planning and Environmental Sustainability, at 706-4593 or e-mail kjones@townofbluffton.com