

AUGUST 2022

The NIEHS Adopt-A-Highway Program

Litter presents a pollution problem in all areas of the environment, but especially when found along streets and highways. These areas receive heavy traffic from humans and/or vehicles and tend to collect litter from the many passing people. Since these areas are paved, litter is likely to be carried away by stormwater runoff into nearby storm drains, ditches and streams. Once the litter reaches the water, it can be carried into other local water bodies and eventually the ocean. Polluted water is dangerous for the entire ecosystem and food chain, including marine species, aquatic plants, and all species that may drink or consume the polluted water.

To reduce pollution in their area, NIEHS joined the Adopt-A-Highway program in the early 1990s and has since maintained a 1.2 mile stretch of road adjacent to the Research Triangle Park campus in North Carolina. Volunteers from the NIEHS Environmental Awareness and Advisory Committee (EAAC) coordinate to collect litter about 3 or 4 times a year, with events usually planned for Earth Day in April and America Recycles Day in November. For each cleanup, a team of about 8 volunteers is outfitted with gloves, bright orange vests, and bags. The team gathers over the lunch hour of a pleasant day to collect the litter and recyclables along the roadside. Volunteers include scientists and lab staff, administrative staff, and even NIEHS leadership. The former NIEHS Director Linda Birnbaum joined one of these roadside



A photo from the 2022 Earth Day NIEHS Adopt -A-Highway cleanup.



A photo from a 2018 NIEHS Adopt-A- Highway cleanup with former NIEHS Director Linda Birnbaum (third from left).

litter collections in 2018 to show her support for this practice! The NIEHS highway cleanup is part of the North Carolina Adopt-A-Highway Program, which was established in 1988 as a response to growing public concern regarding litter along the state's highways. The program has succeeded in reducing roadside litter and improving the environment by removing approximately four million pounds of litter annually.

The latest cleanup arranged by NIEHS was for Earth Day in April 2022. A group of 10 volunteers collected around 10 bags of litter from the 1.2 mile stretch of road. These cleanup activities have helped keep the area surrounding the Research Triangle Park campus clean, beautiful and free of litter. To learn more about local cleanup opportunities and ideas, please read the ["Roadside and Stream Cleanup"](#) article in the Take Action section of this issue.

EVENT



How Much Can Biking Help the Environment?

The 2022 Bike to Work Day was held on May 20, 2022. A pit stop was held outside Building 1 for NIH staff that chose to bike to work for the event. Some data collected from these commuters shed some light on how much biking can help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions!

[LEARN MORE](#)

TAKE ACTION



Roadside and Stream Cleanup

Removing litter from the environment is crucial for reducing pollution. Litter frequently collects along roadsides and washes into streams where it can be carried into larger water bodies. Roadside and stream cleanup activities present opportunities to eliminate litter before it can travel further into the environment.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NEMS TRAINING

Did you know? Adopt-A-Highway programs nationwide collect over 1,000,000 pounds of trash per year! To learn more about pollution prevention at the NIH, please visit the [NEMS Training webpage](#) to view a short (20 minute) NIH environmental awareness training video.