

Merrill Lake Cleanup Volunteers Needed

**By
Warren Bieker**

Volunteers will be needed on Saturday, April 3rd for our annual spring cleanup at Merrill Lake. We will begin at 9 AM, and we usually finish around noon or one o'clock. This effort will be conducted according to the Covid - 19 protocols put in place by the Department of Natural Resources, and that means that their rules will be followed regarding masks and social distancing along with the designated number of volunteers allowed.

DNR will provide the necessary hand tools, but volunteers that have leaf blowers have become very important to the clearing of campsites, trails, and even some of the roadways. If you have a leaf blower, please bring it along. If you have a special rake, shovel, or loppers that you prefer using, please mark it clearly so that it can be easily returned to you.

In the past, in addition to clearing away leaves, we have graveled trails, removed brush, scrubbed interpretive signs on the nature trail, cleaned fire pits, picked up litter, installed signs, swept out the restrooms, set the picnic tables upright, and have even done some painting. The ravages of winter can't always be predicted, so jobs vary from year to year.

As always, be prepared for inclement weather conditions. We have worked in sun, showers, honest to goodness rain storms, and even snow on occasion. Dress appropriately! Bring your gloves, wear your trusty work boots, and stow your rain gear in the rig. Sometimes we think that if you have rain gear, and it's not needed, that it was good insurance!

It is important that you sign up with me by email at ljbieker@comcast.net or by phone at 360-687-5475. Please give me your name and email or phone number, so that if we have to cancel or postpone, I can notify you of the change. It's also important that you sign up with me because of the possible limitations put on the number of volunteers allowed. It's possible that if someone just "showed up" without signing up, that they might have to be turned away. I know that sounds harsh, but the pandemic has changed the rules, and for that we are all sorry.

There's some disagreement on how many years that CSF has been assisting DNR with seasonal cleanups in the spring to open the park and boat launch and then again in the fall to prepare it for winter. But this is either year 16 or 17 that we've been helping to take care of what we call our "home water." The park is scheduled to open to the public on April 15th each year, and then the gate remains open until November 15th. The lake is open to fishing, however, year round if you are willing to carry or roll your pontoon boat or kayak under the gate to access the water. And don't forget your Washington State DISCOVER pass. And your fishing license! Both of those are required, and you don't want a wind knot.