

Letter to the Editor: After Your Adopt-a-Beach Event

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about Adopt-a-Beach can be a great way to help more people in your community learn about the importance of keeping the Great Lakes clean.

Here are six simple steps to write your letter and get it published:

Step 1: Choose what to write in a letter to the editor (LTE). LTEs should be able to stand on their own and make sense to readers who may not already be familiar with Adopt-A-Beach. LTEs that respond to a recent article are most likely to be published, so consider monitoring your local news outlets for the right opportunity, such as articles related to water pollution, water quality, beaches, or other Great Lakes coverage. The best LTEs are an opportunity for you to use your personal experience to offer a new perspective on the newspaper's existing coverage.

Step 2: Write your LTE. LTEs should be focused and direct. Trying to cover several topics and making too many points reduces letters' impact, so try to keep to one subject if possible. **You can use our template below to get started.**

Step 3: Keep it brief. Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for LTEs, but in general it is best to keep them as short and succinct as possible (usually no more than 250 words).

Step 4: List your info. Always include your credentials and contact information, as most publications will require written verification that you have authored the piece. For example, if you were an Adopt-A-Beach Team Leader, make sure to include that!

Step 5: Submit your LTE. Each outlet has different LTE submission guidelines, so be sure to check the outlet's website for specific guidance. Usually, you will need to send an email to an address specifically assigned to letters to the editor at the particular publication, or to the Letters/Opinion Editor directly. When you send in your letter, include a note in the email about why your LTE is timely, interesting and relevant, connecting it to any recent coverage about the Great Lakes, if possible. Include the text of your letter in your email, not as an attachment.

Step 6: Follow up after you submit. Most newspapers have areas online where you can post comments to articles. If your LTE does not get placed within 24 hours, give the Letters/Opinion Editor a call and/or consider going online and adding your letter as a comment to a story.

The template below is intended to be used as a place to start. Feel free to tailor and personalize the letter for your community and to reflect your voice. If you saw a news story that you think could be a good opportunity to weave in Adopt-A-Beach, note the story and date and respond to a specific point in the story that's relevant to keeping the Great Lakes clean.

Sample Post-Cleanup Letter to the Editor

I read your recent article [[Insert headline or link to article]] about [[topic related to water quality, Great Lakes issues, etc]].

[[Description of how your letter about Adopt-a-Beach is related. For example: maybe an article about

the city's water quality didn't talk about the important issue of plastic pollution, or maybe an article about the beginning of beach season should have included a reminder for beachgoers to pick up their litter.]]

[[Insert day, e.g. last Saturday]] I gathered with [[insert number]] other volunteers on the shores of [[insert lake name]] to participate in [the Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach cleanup program](#). We joined thousands of volunteers who participate each year, helping to remove litter from shorelines on all five Great Lakes in all eight Great Lakes states.

[[Add in a bit about your personal experience, e.g. "While it was fun to be out on the beach with friends and family..."]] we were there for a serious purpose – each year, beach cleanups remove hundreds of thousands of pieces of litter – and tens of thousands of pounds of litter – from Great Lakes shorelines. About 85% of the litter that volunteers pick up is plastic, which [breaks down into microplastics that show up in the source of our drinking water](#).

Adopt-A-Beach is an important reminder that [[insert Lake]] is one of our [[state/city's]] most important natural resources and deserves to be protected. I encourage others in our community to visit the [Alliance for the Great Lakes' website](#) to learn more about how you can get involved in future events, and to take action to help protect the lakes all year round.

[[Sign-Off]]