

PADDLE BOARD CLEAN-UP REPORT

What's that guy doing?

We all love the natural beauty of Virginia. I doubt any of us love the ubiquitous trash. But what can we do to make our little corner of Virginia more beautiful? You can put on a pair of gloves and become a litter picker, no previous experience necessary! But first, a little background:

On my wife's birthday in April of 2020 (at the start of the pandemic), she wanted to get out of the house and see the sunrise over the Potomac. We parked along the GW Parkway at a spot that would afford us a glorious view of the sun rising over Maryland. As the dawn slowly gave way to sunrise, we saw a watercraft (hard to make out the details in the early morning light) that looked like a battleship. As the sun rose and the craft approached, we realized it was a gentleman on an SUP (stand up paddleboard) that was loaded up with trash. He pulled into shore right near us and I couldn't resist asking him what he was doing. "Trying to clean up the river, one SUP at a time." I thanked him and he told me his online name, SUP Garbage Man, and that I could follow him on his website, on Facebook, and on Instagram.

That chance meeting flipped a switch in me. After all my years of kayaking along the Potomac and seeing all the trash in the river and thinking "Somebody oughta do something about this," I realized that that somebody was me. The next time I took out my kayak, I strapped on a milk crate and brought some old kitchen tongs and filled that milk crate up with trash that assuredly did not belong in the Potomac.

In honor of SUP Garbage Man, I made an Instagram account, SIK Garbageman (SIK for sit in kayak), and posted my trash pick-up. I quickly found a whole community of litter pickers and ploggers (plog is a combination of pick-up litter and jog) who do their small part to make our planet a cleaner place. Not only do they continue to inspire me, but

they remind me daily that each one of us can have an impact and that each small piece of litter that is cleared away (or never created in the first place!) is a step toward a cleaner world. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle is the motto of a cleaner planet.

Since my first clean up in May of 2020, I have cleaned up the equivalent of 646 plastic grocery bags of trash and recycling. (I always try to separate out the recycling, so it doesn't clog up our landfills more than they are already clogged up.) I do most of my trash picking while kayaking or out on my SUP, but I will also go for "litter walks" and clear away trash around the neighborhood, whatever neighborhood I happen to be in. SUP Garbage Man is much more prolific. He has cleared over 3719 cubic feet of trash and recycling (a size bigger than a city bus) since he started in May of 2019.

If you would like to follow SUP Garbage Man and donate to his cleanups -- for example, he has to pay money to Fairfax County to take the tires he clears out of the river -- his website is: [SUP Garbage Man](#). You can also follow him on Facebook or Instagram, just search for SUP Garbage Man. (You can likewise follow me, but on Instagram only, search for SIK.Garbageman).

Even better, come join us! Put on a pair of gloves (trash is gross!) and pick up that crushed beer can on the side of the road that you see each morning while you are out walking. It feels great to improve our little corner of the world and your neighbors will appreciate your efforts as well. (If you want to post about your cleanup on Facebook or Instagram, feel free to do that as well, but that extra little bit is certainly not necessary.)

Thank you for reading and wishing you all a great, clean day!

Richard (Rick) Franklin
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