

Hands-On Approach Brings Thousands Outdoors to Restore, Refurbish, Rehabilitate

September 20, 2018

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PLANO, Texas (September 20, 2018) – With a focus on projects in nine states 20 years ago, volunteers set out to unify their work to restore public lands, parks, forests and beaches under the newly organized [National Public Lands Day](#) (NPLD). That year, more than 1,500 Toyota team members, families and friends worked together to clean the waters of the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. and plant greenery at the National Wildlife Refuge in Seal Beach, California.

Toyota's commitment to expanding a lasting impact on the environment has grown with the company's presence in the U.S. This year, Toyota has 50 projects planned across 20 states and Puerto Rico, and expects more than 3,000 team members to get outside this weekend and volunteer. Additionally, Toyota provides the support for nearly 2,000 additional community projects across the nation.

“Our core value of environmental sustainability is reflected in our long-term commitment to National Public Lands Day,” said Kevin Butt, regional environmental director, Toyota. “We have seen our team members take ownership of this annual event, and connect with their local communities in lasting ways. It is something we have seen grow alongside our company's presence in the U.S.”

Toyota's national partnership with NPLD encompasses projects team members have found in their communities to celebrate this year's theme of “restoration and resilience.” Over the past 20 years, Toyota has contributed more than \$9 million to NPLD in donations, grants, and volunteer equivalent hours.

Team Member Involvement

Toyota's team members have taken ownership of their project sites, with many having personal connections to the parks.

When a large section of Aaron Wright's favorite recreational area had been closed for an extended period of time, he saw an opportunity in NPLD to find out why. That place was the [Greenbelt Corridor Park](#) in Denton, Texas. “The site is very personal because my wife and I used to go kayaking there,” said Wright. “I didn't even know why we couldn't use the area anymore.”

After heavy rains in 2015, the Greenbelt Corridor, a 20-mile multi-use trail system (12 miles for equestrian and 10 for hike and bike use), was closed from the US 380 access point up to 3 miles north. Initially set to last two weeks, the closure has been in effect for over two years. “The area lies in a flood plain,” said Wright. “There was so much impact that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is putting out a bid to redo the parking area at trailheads, plus much of the trails were washed away.”

From Rivers to Trees

About 200 miles south, water was also the cause of a closure of more than 113,000 acres of land and water. Hurricane Harvey blew through seven counties in southeast Texas. The [Big Thicket National Preserve](#) (BITH) near Beaumont, Texas, is a heavily forested area encompassing over 29 counties and more than 3.35 million acres to protect the many plant and animal species within.

On September 22, nearly 200 volunteers from Gulf States Toyota, St. Bernard Project, AmeriCorps and other community organizations will join the nation's largest single-day volunteer effort.

“This event gives us a chance to remind people that these public lands are theirs to enjoy and care for,” said Karen Matsuyama, community connections analyst, Toyota. “We see friends, families and colleagues come together and appreciate our national parks while teaching children at a young age to give back and be outdoors.”

Over the past year, park officials and volunteers have mounted a steady clean-up effort, but some areas still need

help. National Park Service plans to mobilize volunteer support during NPLD 2018 to restore areas that have remaining storm damage and debris. To help with these efforts, Toyota and NEEF will provide a \$20,000 grant to support a local nonprofit to continue the restoration work started on Saturday.

50 Toyota Sites Across the U.S.

2018 marks the 20th year of partnership between Toyota and NEEF's National Public Lands Day. Toyota encourages its employees to get involved in NPLD activities throughout the nation by helping to care for parks, forests, rivers, beaches, shorelines, and other public lands.

Toyota has 50 sites throughout the country where team members volunteer from Puerto Rico to California and everywhere in between. Some of this year's Toyota-led projects include:

Chicago – At this annual event, volunteers will be cutting and hauling non-native brush; there will also be native seed collection in which the seed that is collected will be planted in area that brush has been cleared.

Torrance, California – About 200 Toyota volunteers will provide needed care for the White Point Education & Nature Preserve Center by planting native shrubs, removing invasive weeds, watering native plants, grooming trails and more. Efforts will help restore this habitat for wildlife as well as create a beautiful place for the community to enjoy.

Deerfield Beach, Florida – Nearly 170 Toyota volunteers will clean up 11 coastal and nature areas including the Deerfield Beach, Pompano Beach, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Oakland Park Boulevard, Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, Ft. Lauderdale Beach, Dania Beach, Von D. Mizell & Eula Johnson, Smallwood Park and Red Reef Park near Palm Beach.

Georgetown, Kentucky – Volunteers will plant 75 iris bulbs, level monuments that have deteriorated or been vandalized, repair a stone fence along US 25, gather/repair capstones around koi pond, trim trees and paint bridges.

Kansas City, Missouri – More than 125 volunteers will participate in a half-day clean-up at Smithville Lake to clear trains and the Sailboat Cove for outdoor recreational use.

St. Louis, Missouri – Toyota volunteers will return to Vinita Park once again this year to assist with cleaning up walking trails, trash pickup, and beautifying the park.

Blue Springs, Mississippi – Projects at Tombigbee State Park will consist of improving/updating the disc golf course, Pavilion #2 upgrades, installation of approximately 2,400 feet of split rail fence and design and installation of landscape materials at front entrance and park office. This is the fourth year of a five-year, \$250,000 commitment to restore the park.

Ann Arbor, Michigan – Volunteers will help Leslie Science & Nature Center clean up their Nature Playscape area, pulling invasive species, spreading woodchips and cleaning up the surrounding trails. The Nature Playscape began with Toyota volunteers and Eagle Scouts in 2017, and has become a place for programs, camps and the general public to learn about our natural world.

Evansville, Indiana – In addition to a \$50,000 donation to a new innovative and adaptive playground in the community, volunteers will install a wheelchair accessible swing for the future site. The park supports multi-sensory play for children with special needs.

Portland, Oregon – Volunteers will restore and beautify this metro marine park by removing invasive species, trimming vegetation for safe and easy access (all of which will go to the Oregon Zoo for the elephants, bears and rhinos to eat!), design/plant/care for bioswales and medians for better water filtering, clean/paint/maintain facility resources, restore habitat for native wildlife, and learn about the history of the area.

With Toyota team members committed to both restoring and reclaiming public lands for the local community, the organization continues to work toward preserving the biodiversity of the surrounding communities. Toyota's [Environmental Challenge 2050](#) specifically calls for all Toyota sites to establish a future society in harmony with nature. This includes conserving forests and other rich natural systems in the region. Through everyday operational initiatives to have zero-landfill manufacturing sites and programs like NPLD, team members play a key role to actively enhance the natural balance of plants, animals and ecosystems in North America.

National Public Lands Day celebrates the connection between people and their environment by inviting people to get outside spend the day caring for and enjoying the outdoors. NEEF partners with local organizations across the nation to connect people of all ages and abilities with public lands for recreation, hands-on learning, and community-building.