BLUEGILL RUN ALLIANCE · NEWSLETTER KIT

The one-hour newsletter

The newsletter takes a day because it starts from blank every month. From now on, six blocks stay the same and you only write what is new.

6
blocks, same order every month

~450
words of new writing per issue

60
minutes, start to scheduled

The routine

When	Step	Time
All month	Drop anything newsletter-worthy into the worksheet (a number, a photo, a date). Thirty seconds each, on your phone.	0
Newsletter day	Open the worksheet. Pick the lead story: the thing with the best number or the best photo.	10 min
	Write the six blocks into the worksheet, using the word limits on page 2. Do not open Mailchimp yet.	25 min
	Duplicate last month's campaign in Mailchimp, paste each block over the old one, swap the two photos.	10 min
	Send a test to yourself, read it on your phone, run the checklist on page 3.	10 min
	Schedule it. Tuesday or Thursday, 7:30 a.m.	5 min

What is in this kit

In this document
Page 2: the template block by block
Page 3: subject lines, the parts that never change, pre-send checklist
Pages 4 and 5: November's issue, written from your notes

Separate files
newsletter-template.html paste into Mailchimp once, save as a template
november-issue.html this month, ready to load
fill-in-worksheet.md the monthly notes doc

The rule that saves the most time: write in the worksheet, not in Mailchimp. Formatting is where the day goes.

THE TEMPLATE

Six blocks, same order, every month

Each block has a word limit and two or three questions. Answer the questions and the block is done.

1. Subject line + preview text

Limit: subject under 50 characters, preview under 90. **Ask:** What is the single best number or event this month? What will they do if they open it? Use a pattern from page 3.

2. From the creek (director's note)

Limit: 60 to 90 words. **Ask:** What did you see out there this month? What is one thing that surprised you? End with one sentence pointing at the lead story. No "dear friends", no recap of the mission.

3. Lead story

Limit: headline under 10 words, 120 to 170 words, one photo. **Ask:** What happened? What are the numbers (people, pounds, trees, sites)? Who should be thanked, as a group? What does it mean for the creek? One link at the end.

4. Creek check (the data block)

Limit: 60 to 100 words plus a small table. **Ask:** How many sites were sampled? How many good, fair, poor? Which one changed, and the likely reason in plain words? Readers stay for this block. Keep it every month, even when nothing changed ("all quiet" is news).

5. Get involved (two to three items)

Limit: 40 to 60 words each. **Ask for each:** What, date, time, where (in general terms), how many spots or how many still needed, what to bring, the sign-up link. Always put the number still needed: it is the reason to click.

6. Support the work + one small thing

Limit: 40 to 70 words, plus one sentence. **Ask:** What is the current fundraising goal and where are we? What does a gift pay for, in one concrete item? Then one small thing anyone can do at home this month.

The parts you never retype: logo row, "view in browser", the donate button, the standing footer (meeting schedule, how to report a spill, address, unsubscribe). They live in the template file and carry over when you duplicate last month.

FILL-IN GUIDE

Subject lines, standing parts, and the last ten minutes

Subject line patterns

Pattern	Example
The number, then the next thing	2,310 pounds out (and 300 trees going in)
The odd detail	41 tires, 68 of you, one Saturday
The ask with a gap	18 more hands for the Nov 14 planting
What the water said	October creek check: 10 of 12 sites good

Write two, use the stronger one. If Mailchimp's A/B test is on your plan, test both on 20% of the list and send the winner after four hours.

Photo rules

- Two photos per issue: the lead story and one event. Hands and water beat group shots.
- Crop to landscape, 1200 px wide, under 300 KB. Write the alt text as you insert it.
- Only use faces of volunteers who said yes on the sign-in sheet.

Pre-send checklist (10 minutes)

	Check
☐	Every date has a weekday, and the weekday is right
☐	Every link clicked once in the test email, none still say [link]
☐	Numbers match the source (sign-in sheet, sampling sheet, giving report)
☐	Nothing promised that is not confirmed (matches, speakers, permits)
☐	Preview text filled in, not the Mailchimp default
☐	Read on your phone: no block longer than a thumb-scroll and a half
☐	Last month's photos and alt text replaced
☐	Scheduled, not sent: Tuesday or Thursday, 7:30 a.m.

If a month is thin, drop block 5 to one item. Do not drop block 4.

NOVEMBER ISSUE · AS IT WILL READ

Subject: 2,310 pounds out (and 300 trees going in)
Backup subject: 41 tires, 68 of you, one Saturday
Preview text: Cleanup results, what the water told us in October, and the Nov 14 planting.

From the creek

The leaves are down along the lower banks, which means you can finally see the water from the trail again. It also means you can see what the water carried in over the summer, and in October a lot of you came out to haul it away. Below: what that Saturday added up to, what our October samples showed, and where we need you next.

68 volunteers, 9 sites, 2,310 pounds

On Saturday, October 17, 68 of you spread out across nine cleanup sites and pulled 2,310 pounds of trash out of the creek and its banks. That includes 41 tires, most of them from the stretch below site 3, where they have been sinking into the bank for years. The Saturday crew at site 4 stayed an extra hour to finish a stubborn shopping cart and two tires wedged under roots.

Tires are not just ugly: they trap sediment, hold stagnant water and break down slowly into the gravel where fish lay eggs. Forty-one fewer of them is a real change for that stretch. Thank you to every crew, every site lead and everyone who drove a full truck to the drop-off.

See the photos from all nine sites → [link]

Confirm before sending: the 2,310 lb total is from your notes; check it against the drop-off weigh tickets. Also confirm the site 4 crew is happy to be called out as a group.

Creek check: October

Our monitors sampled all 12 sites in October. Ten rated good or excellent. Two rated fair, both downstream of the culvert at site 7, where dissolved oxygen was low after the dry September. Low flow plus warm water does that; we expect it to recover with fall rain and will resample in November.

Rating	Sites
Excellent	4
Good	6
Fair	2
Poor	0

Get involved

Tree planting, Saturday, November 14, 9 a.m. to noon. 300 native seedlings go into the bare bank along the north fork. 22 of you have signed up; we need 40. Bring gloves and boots, we bring shovels and coffee. **Sign up** → [link]

Rain barrel workshop, Saturday, December 5, 10 a.m. Build your own and take it home. 15 spots, $35 including the barrel. **Save a spot** → [link]

Support the work

Our year-end goal is $18,000 for monitoring supplies and next spring's plantings. We are at $6,450, about 36% of the way. On Giving Tuesday, December 1, a member of our board will match gifts up to $5,000. $25 buys ten seedlings. **Give** → [link]

One small thing

Rake leaves away from the storm drain at your curb. Everything in that drain goes straight to the creek.

See you on the bank,
[Your name], Director

Confirm before sending: the $5,000 Giving Tuesday match (your notes say not final; if it is not, delete that sentence). Also check the site 7 wording with your monitoring lead.