

2013 International Coastal Cleanup
September 21, 2013
28th Annual Event

Topline Messages:

- **Why is ocean trash a problem we need to address?**
 - **It's a threat to our economies:** Coastal municipalities spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year on daily beach cleanups and to prevent trash from reaching the water, while recreational boaters and the commercial shipping and fishing industries face significantly higher costs from debris in the ocean.
 - **It's a threat to wildlife and habitat:** Ocean trash can entrap and strangle ocean wildlife, many of which are listed as threatened or endangered. Also, if animals eat ocean trash, they can absorb high concentrations of toxins. This has been seen in both seabirds and sea turtles, where higher levels of contaminants have been found in the blood of animals that had ingested plastic particles. Ocean trash is also a threat to ecologically critical yet sensitive marine habitat.
 - **It's a threat to our health and food safety:** Toxic chemicals are transferred up the food chain as large ocean predators—many of which we eat—accumulate toxins eaten or absorbed by smaller fish and plants. The concentration of toxins in these predators, such as tuna and mahi-mahi, increase considerably as they move up the food chain.
- **Trash jeopardizes the health of the ocean, coastline, economy and people. It's in our ocean and waterways and on our beaches—and is here to stay unless we change our practices.** Trash is one of the biggest threats to the health of our ocean and waterways. For 28 years, we have watched as trash has threatened ocean wildlife and ecosystems, and undermined tourism and economic activity.
 - Worldwide statistics In last year's Cleanup, over 550,000 people (561,633) picked up more than 10 million pounds of trash (10,149,988) along nearly 20,000 miles of coastlines (17,719).

Palm Beach County statistics: During the International Coastal Cleanup 2012, in Palm Beach County alone, over 3,000 volunteers picked up more than 31,000 lbs of trash from Palm Beach County beaches, lakes, and participating neighborhoods. From the information provided by volunteers, the source of most of the trash and debris comes from shoreline and recreational activities (58.30%) and smoking-related activities (26.87%).

- **Future generations will be the ones dealing with our trash.** We think this can and will look different in the future. By working together to find solutions, we will take significant steps forward in understanding and preventing ocean trash.
 - Estimated time it takes for these products to decompose:
 - Fishing line: 600 years
 - Plastic bottles: 450 years
 - Aluminum cans: 200 years
 - Plastic bags: 1-20 years
- **The ocean isn't the only location impacted. Trash affects all waterways, coastal or inland, and threatens the well-being of communities that depend on them.** In 2012, Pennsylvania Cleanup volunteers collected the greatest amount of debris, with each volunteer hauling approximately 90 pounds of trash from lakes, riverbeds, creeks and streams.
- **What you use, eat and drink in your everyday life could end up in the ocean.** Every year our Top 10 list includes items such as cigarettes, utensils and beverage containers—trash that comes from our everyday lives and households. These items are not only unnatural to the ocean, but are dangerous to the wildlife that relies on the ecosystem. The ocean truly is always downstream.

- **Ocean Conservancy is tackling trash at every point in the lifecycle to create healthier beaches and oceans to benefit the environment and people.** Enhanced individual responsibility, new industry leadership, innovative science and smart public policy represent the needed components of a comprehensive solution to the ongoing challenge of ocean trash.
 - The Cleanup is an essential step of picking up trash after it's already ended up in the wrong place.
 - Rippl, Ocean Conservancy's new mobile app, aims to address trash at the starting point—or even before it's created.
 - The Trash Free Seas Alliance touches on the point after trash is created and used, but before it's thrown away. The hope is that innovation drives alternatives.
- **Ocean Conservancy is digging deeper into ocean trash. Starting with Cleanup events in 2013, Ocean Conservancy will distribute new data forms that will help us learn more about what kinds of debris are polluting beaches and waterways around the world.**
 - The Cleanup data forms are more specific, asking volunteers to note not just the type of items they find but what they are made of as well. Understanding what kinds of materials are on our beaches is important in order to advocate for product redesign or new policy solutions that would address the most problematic items and materials.
- **Every piece of trash that is picked up during the Cleanup should be a challenge for change.** Trash simply shouldn't be in the ocean or on a beach. Questions we should think about for every item picked up: How did it get there? How can we prevent it from happening again?
 - Whether it is by changing your habits to create less trash, or pushing industries and governments to find alternative uses, we can work together to find a solution.
 - **We have a responsibility all year long to reduce, remove and reinvent.** From product development to disposal, we all have a role to play.
- **We can't do it alone.** While solutions are built on individual actions of people, organizations and companies, it will take a collective movement to make the biggest difference. We need more volunteers than ever to join our movement and make a bigger difference. Here are three things you can do:
 - Be a part of the International Coastal Cleanup!
 - [Pledge to fight trash](#): What would happen if 10,000 people decided not to make as much trash for one month? We could reduce the trash on Earth by over a million pounds. Take the pledge to help turn the tide on trash.
 - [Download Rippl](#), Ocean Conservancy's free mobile application that helps you make simple, sustainable lifestyle choices.
- **There are uncontrollable events—like the Japan tsunami—that add to the problem of marine debris. That's why it's important to tackle what's preventable.** The tsunami debris was unpreventable, but ocean trash *is*. Our ocean needs to be healthy and resilient when these unthinkable, uncontrollable events take place.
- **We hope data from our Cleanups in the past will be able to provide a baseline for the kinds of debris washing ashore on the West Coast and Hawaii.** For 28 years, Ocean Conservancy has been organizing Cleanups—an opportunity to gather data and a snapshot of what is found on our beaches and coastlines. This will make it easier to compare with what will wash ashore in the months and years to come.
- **Our vision is for Trash Free Seas.** This problem is human-generated and preventable. Keeping our ocean free from trash is one of the easiest ways we can make the ocean more resilient. From product design to proper trash disposal, we all have a role to play in keeping our ocean clean and free of debris.
 - In addition to the Cleanup, Ocean Conservancy-led efforts include building a Trash Free Seas Alliance® of industry, science and conservation leaders committed to reduce waste and supporting a working group at the world's leading ecological think tank, The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS), to identify the scope and impact of marine debris on ocean ecosystems.

The 2012 International Coastal Cleanup, by the numbers:

Total:

- Over 550,000 people (**561,633**) picked up more than 10 million pounds of trash (**10,149,988**) along nearly 20,000 miles of coastlines (**17,719**).
- 3rd all-time highest in total pounds collected since 1986
- 2nd all-time highest in total items reported since 1986

Volunteers found:

- Total trash equal to the weight of 41 blue whales
- Total trash equal to the weight 10 Boeing 747 jumbo jets
- Enough beverage bottles that, when stacked end to end, are equal to:
 - 1,000 Empire State Buildings
 - 2,408 Space Needles
 - 1,368 Eiffel Towers
 - Distance from New York to Washington, D.C.
- Enough plastic straws and stirrers, when stacked end to end, are 14 times taller than the height of Mount Everest
- Enough disposable cigarette lighters to start 178,557,500 campfires
- Enough trash to fill Disney's Epcot ball

In the past 27 years of Cleanups:

- More than 9.5 million volunteers (**9,654,895**) picked up more than 160 million pounds of trash (**163,940,907**) from about 330,000 miles of shoreline (**330,009**)

Volunteers found:

- 57 million cigarette butts, which, if stacked vertically, would be as tall as 3,867 Empire State Buildings
- Enough glass and plastic bottles to provide every resident of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia and Phoenix a cold beverage on a hot summer day
- Almost 10 million plastic bags (9,806,905), which required 1,176 barrels of oil to produce
- More than 1 million (1,017,444) diapers—enough to put one on every child born in Japan last year
- Enough cups, plates, forks, knives and spoons to host a picnic for 2.3 million people