



Beach Adopter's Handbook



Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation
January 2007

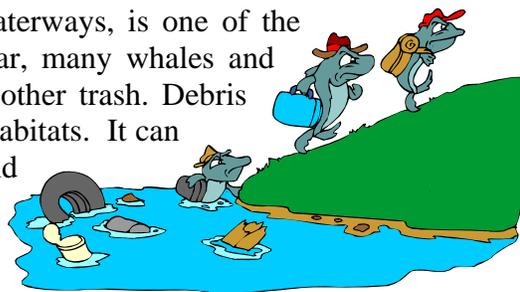
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*New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation*



Introduction

Marine debris, or garbage in or near coastal waterways, is one of the biggest problems facing marine life. Every year, many whales and dolphins are entangled in lost fishing gear and other trash. Debris degrades important rocky shore and underwater habitats. It can injure humans and cause problems for boaters, and cause economic losses through its effect on commercially valuable marine species and important tourist areas.



Marine debris comes from both land-based and water-based sources. On land, rivers and streams can carry debris far from its source and out to the ocean. Beachgoers often leave picnic supplies behind. Debris that ends up on the coast can wash into the ocean and affect marine life and its habitats. On the ocean, boaters throw trash in the water, thinking that it will just “go away”, when in fact, many types of debris can linger for several years or possibly several hundred (see the marine debris timeline and fast facts handouts at the end of this handbook for more information and fun facts for your volunteers)!

Prevention through education and outreach is one way to lessen the impact of marine debris. Coastal cleanups are another way. Your adoption of this beach will help not only clean the beach and ocean for animals and humans, but also offer the opportunity to educate cleanup participants and all the bystanders that wonder what you’re doing and why you’re doing it!

Although beach cleanups are a fun way to volunteer, it can be challenging to gather a group of people together every month. We thank you for your commitment to the oceans and look forward to making this a fun, educational experience for everyone!

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Why Should You Adopt a Beach?

- The Adopt-a-Beach Program offers the opportunity to build morale within your group, and provide your group with a visible presence in the community.
- Cleaning up a beach provides immediate results – you can literally see the impact you are making as the garbage bags pile up!
- Participating in a cleanup will not only help marine life and your fellow humans, but also give you the opportunity to participate in a scientific study that will help expand our knowledge of threats to the ocean, develop appropriate educational programs and work with citizens and lawmakers to implement effective anti-pollution and ocean protection legislation.
- With your help, we will reduce and hopefully eventually eliminate the threat of marine debris

The Effects of Marine Debris

On Animals

Debris affects marine life in two ways: through ingestion or entanglement. Sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and ingest them—blocking their digestive system and potentially killing them. Fishing line and nets, rope and other trash can wrap around fins, flippers and limbs of fish, seals, whales, crustaceans, seabirds and other animals. This can affect their ability to eat, move and care for their young. Lost fishing gear such as traps and nets can keep “fishing” for years.

It takes a long time for some trash to go away!	
Glass Bottle.....	1 million years
Monofilament fishing line.....	600 years
Plastic bottle.....	450 years
Aluminum can.....	80-200 years
Foamed plastic buoy.....	80 years
Nylon fabric.....	30-40 years
Plastic bag.....	10-20 years
Cigarette butt.....	1-5 years
Apple core.....	2 months
Newspaper.....	6 weeks

Information from U.S. National Park Service & Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL

On People

Nobody wants to visit a beach where trash is prevalent. Debris on a beach can be unsightly and unsafe. Debris in waterways can hurt swimmers and boaters.

Ways to Help Stop the Threat of Marine Pollution

Our Adopt-a-Beach Program is a GREAT way to work toward preventing marine pollution. Not only are you physically acting to help the environment, but by talking to people about the program and your monthly cleanups, you are also helping to spread awareness of the problem and inspiring others to help.

Our program, while locally-based, is part of other national efforts to mitigate marine debris. Below is some information on these other programs.

Regular beach cleanups were spawned by the success of the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC). The ICC was started by the Ocean Conservancy in Texas in 1985, and since then, it has expanded nationally and internationally. During the ICC, participants clean a local beach on one day in September. Several sites in Seacoast New Hampshire (and Maine) are cleaned during each ICC, and hundreds of thousands of volunteers participate in the event each year. For more information about the ICC, ask Blue Ocean Society (we usually coordinate the cleanup at one site each year) or visit www.coastalcleanup.org.

2005 Worldwide Top Ten Items Collected – International Coastal Cleanup		
Item	Total	%
1. Cigarettes/cigarette filters	1,638,066	26.3%
2. Caps, lids	640,578	10.3%
3. Food wrappers and containers	624,864	10.0%
4. Beverage bottles (plastic) < 2 liters	488,575	7.9%
5. Bags	358,052	5.8%
6. Cups/plates/forks/knives/spoons	316,817	5.1%
7. Beverage bottles (glass)	297,722	4.8%
8. Beverage cans	246,822	4.0%
9. Straws/stirrers	240,055	3.9%
10. Clothing/shoes	111,435	1.8%

Source: The Ocean Conservancy, www.oceanconservancy.org

National Marine Debris Monitoring Program (NMDMP)

The NMDMP is a monthly marine debris monitoring program which is a scientific study at 180 sites nationwide to reveal trends in marine debris and identify the major sources of debris. Currently, two of Blue Ocean Society's cleanup sites, Plaice Cove and Jenness State Beach are part of this program. The nationwide study officially concludes in May 2007, but we will keep cleaning as part of our local study on pollution. Beaches are selected for the monthly monitoring program based on several criteria. Several local beaches do not qualify for the NMDMP, which is why we began working with the NH Coastal Program in cleaning other beaches so that we can follow trends in pollution on individual beaches in NH as well as contributing to the national program.



Program Responsibilities & Adopt-a-Beach Timeline

Overview of Responsibilities

Your Responsibilities

- Gather your group and clean the beach once per month, or work out a schedule with us to alternate months. **Please e-mail your cleanup schedule to jen@blueoceansociety.org.**
- Write down participant names on a sign-up list at each cleanup
- Collect trash and fill out data cards. Make sure data cards are filled out as accurately as possible!
- Weigh trash
- Bring trash to a local dumpster or dump (pick-up may be available in some locations; check with us)
- Send data cards to Blue Ocean Society
- Keep in touch with coordinator at Blue Ocean Society regarding supply needs, volunteer training needs, and questions.



Blue Ocean Society's Responsibilities

- Coordinate cleanup dates with your group leader
- Provide orientation to the group leader and volunteers before you begin your first cleanup, attend first cleanup, and be available for consultation throughout your service time.
- Provide all supplies, including gloves, data cards and trash bags
- Provide background information for you to give your volunteers
- Send out media releases, put up signage (where possible) and include your name in on our web site and in our newsletters to recognize your efforts.

Timeline for Adopting a Beach:

- Contact Blue Ocean Society with the name of the beach you'd like to adopt
- Receive and read handbook
- Fill out application form
- Schedule first cleanup date/orientation session
- Gather volunteers! You may conduct the cleanup exclusively with your group, or work with us to recruit other members of the public. If possible, give your volunteers some information beforehand (e.g. talk about the cleanup & why you're doing it at a club meeting... contact Blue Ocean Society if you need information or would like us to come and deliver a presentation). Ideally, have them read this handbook!
- Show up on the cleanup date. A Blue Ocean Society staff member will be there to provide an orientation and give you supplies.
- After the first cleanup, work with your group members and Blue Ocean Society on promoting and recruiting people for following cleanups.



At Each Cleanup

- Bring supplies (and refreshments if you want to)
- Bring information about your group. People walking by often look at information – it's a great way to get exposure! We also have brochures, decals and pocket ashtrays you can hand out to participants & bystanders.
- Have participants sign in as they arrive.
- If you have new participants, give a brief overview before the cleanup. Make sure they understand the data card, what information to collect, and items they should and should not pick up. **Data accuracy is very important to ensure the success of our study!**
- Hand out supplies
- Tell participants not to pick up driftwood or anything that appears to be biodegradable or unsafe (wood pieces, shells, seaweed, dead birds and fish, etc. should stay on the beach).
- Due to state law, do not pick up whole lobster traps or fishing gear with identifying marks. If you do see a lobster trap, just drag it up above the waterline so it won't wash back out. It's OK to pick up pieces of traps, buoys, and rope.
- Tell participants to be safe – make sure people realize the hazards so you are not responsible!
- Some trash is at your discretion. If there are certain items you don't want in a trash bag in your car (such as dog poop), tell people not to pick it up. Likewise with large lawn chairs and other items. If you can't bring them with you, just pull them up above the high tide line and make a pile.
- Conduct the cleanup. Make sure everyone is spread out uniformly from the water line to the highest point of the beach. Start at the far end of the beach and work your way back so you don't have to carry the trash so far.
- At the end of the cleanup, gather everyone for a wrap-up (if you want to). It can be interesting to talk about the strangest things people found and what surprised them about the cleanup.
- Combine all the trash into as few bags as possible. Weigh all the trash and mark the total pounds on the data card.
- Make sure the front side of each data card (name, weather info, etc.) is filled out completely and each debris item is totaled on the back. Enter the total # of **full** bags of trash, total # of cleanup participants (adults & children), and total pounds of trash on the data card.
- Take the trash to a local dumpster or dump or leave it in the designated spot for pick-up.
- Send your data cards to Jen Kennedy at Blue Ocean Society, 143 Pleasant Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801

If you see a stranded marine mammal (e.g. whale, seal), dead or alive, please let us know and also call the New England Aquarium's stranding hotline: 617-973-5247

We'll contact you periodically to make sure everything's going well, but feel free to contact us if you have questions. As you conduct your cleanups, we'll put a press release out in recognition of your group, include your group in media releases about the Adopt-a-Beach Program, and put up a sign at the beach (where permitted). If you have any information on your group (information, previous press releases, logos), please pass it along to us!



We sincerely appreciate your help and hope your adoption will last a long time. If you decide you would like to stop cleaning your site for some reason, or if for some reason you cannot do your cleanup one month, please contact us as soon as you make this decision as data consistency is important. If at all possible, try to find a replacement to coordinate cleanups at your site.

Cleanup Calendar

To make it easy for groups to conduct cleanups regularly, you will establish your own cleanup schedule (as opposed to following a set schedule that we dictate). Cleanups should be 28-30 days apart. It is helpful if you pick a designated day (e.g. 1st Saturday of each month) and stick to it each month. If you need help establishing a schedule, let us know. Please list your intended cleanup dates in your application. If you think you may miss a month for any reason, please let us know ASAP so that we can find a group to fill in for you.

Cleanup Supply Checklist

- Data cards
- Sign-in sheets
- Clip board(s)
- Trash bags
- Gloves
- Scale
- Brochures
- Refreshments (optional)

Reminder: Do not pick up

- Whole lobster traps & buoys
- Driftwood, plywood
- Dead animals (fish, seals, birds, etc.). If you see a dead marine mammal (e.g. a seal, whale, please call us at 603-431-0260 and the New England Aquarium at 617-973-5247).
- Anything that presents a safety hazard

Thank you for your participation in this important project! Enjoy the cleanups!