



Digital Beach Cleanup Kit

Guidelines & Resources for Leading a Beach Cleanup with Your Community



Updated August 2022



Digital Beach Cleanup Kit

All the information you need to lead a successful beach cleanup with your group!

Thank you for planning a beach cleanup with your community! Below are some guidelines and information on what to expect at your cleanup. Please circulate this information to your volunteer team before the event.

Guide Outline:

- **Before the Cleanup:** How to prepare before your cleanup day
- **Supplies Needed for the Cleanup:** Supplies that you will need to gather and provide for your group, or ask that your volunteers bring along with them
- **Cleanup Safety:** Information to share with your group on how to stay safe at your cleanup
- **What Happens at the Cleanup:** How to structure your cleanup and collect data
- **Submitting Your Cleanup Data:** How to submit your data to Blue Ocean Society after your cleanup
- **Collecting Data with our App:** A guide to using our data collection app for your phone
- **Collecting Data with our Data Cards:** A guide to using our printable data cards

Before the Cleanup:

- **Cleanup Leader and Volunteers:** Designate a cleanup leader who is willing to organize your group's volunteers and supplies, ensure volunteers follow safety protocols, and give instructions at the cleanup. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions while planning your cleanup.
- **Time and Place:** Decide with your group which beach you will be cleaning, the meeting point, and the date and time. Cleanups are usually scheduled for 1-2 hours. Communicate with all members of your group about the start time, setup and handing out supplies. When coming from further locations it's best to carpool to ensure everyone arrives around the same time.
- **Appropriate Attire:** It is usually 10-15 degrees cooler at the beach than it is inland. Cleanup participants should dress in layers and wear closed-toe shoes (e.g., hiking boots or sneakers) or sturdy sandals with an ankle strap.

- **Snacks/Lunch:** You are welcome to bring lunch or a snack, and drinks. In keeping with our mission, we respectfully request that food/drink items be packed in reusable containers, and beverage cans/bottles be recycled wherever possible. Please make sure to dispose of your trash appropriately!

Supplies Needed for the Cleanup:

- **Data Collection:**
 - **IDEALLY - Marine Debris Tracker App:** Collecting data on the marine debris found during beach cleanups is very important and contributes directly to our research! To increase safety and decrease the use of paper, we've begun collecting data at our cleanups using the free Marine Debris Tracker app. Please have at least a few members of your group download the app, create an account and select the Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation list BEFORE the cleanup, as doing all this at the cleanup takes time and is sometimes difficult due to limited cell service at some beaches. Ideally, there will be at least one "data collector" with the app for every 2-3 people in your group.
 - **Alternatively, you can use Paper Data Cards:** Using the app increases accuracy and lessens the time we need to spend in data entry. But if you would like to print and use a paper data card, you can find one attached to this document. One card should be handed out per team of 4-6 people. It is best to supply clipboards along with the cards, or print them on a heavier cardstock so the paper stays intact during the cleanup. All data cards should be mailed to Blue Ocean Society after your cleanup to enter our database. (400 Little Harbor Road #1103, Portsmouth, NH 03801). You will also need pencils.
- **Gloves:** Reusable gloves, such as work gloves or gardening gloves that can be washed, are best, but when these are not available, we recommend using disposable non-latex gloves.
- **Trash Bags:** Reusable bags are recommended at locations in which the trash can be dumped from the bags. If this not possible, try reusing large shopping bags, grain/pellet bags or using garbage bags. There should be at least one designated trash and one designated recycling bag per team of 4-6 people.
- **Scale:** to weigh trash at the end. A luggage scale works well. Contact us if you'd like to borrow one. You can also estimate the pounds.

Cleanup Safety:

- **COVID-19:** Please adhere to [current CDC COVID guidelines](#) and any state/local safety regulations. Please make sure to wash/sanitize your hands after the cleanup and avoid touching your face during the cleanup.
- **Be prepared to supervise children and provide safety info:** See “Introduction to Your Group Cleanup” (p. 6) for a basic introduction you can give to your group after everyone arrives. This includes information about the data cards and why cleanups are necessary. ALL participants should listen to this introduction so that everyone understands their role.
- **On the Beach:**
 - Do not pick up sharp items. If you feel unsafe picking up an item, please leave it where you found it. While it’s rare to find medical waste such as needles, these are occasionally found, and broken glass is prevalent. These should not be picked up by cleanup volunteers.
 - Do not remove lobster traps or buoys from the site.
 - If you see dead animals, look, but **don’t touch!** If you see a marine mammal (e.g., a seal), contact your local stranding organization.
 - **Maine Stranding Hotline:** (800) 532-9551
 - **New Hampshire Stranding Hotline:** (603) 997-9448
 - **Massachusetts Stranding Hotline:** (617) 973-5247
- **Respect for the Natural Environment:** Please respect the environment you’re in. Try not to disturb living animals/plants. If there are dunes and grasses on the beach, please stay off!



Volunteers from Liberty Mutual picking up rope from Foss Beach in May 2015.

What Happens at the Cleanup:

1. **Arrive at the site.** Cleanup leader talks to the group about why cleanups are important, cleanup procedures and designated site to clean (see suggested talking points on page 6).
2. **Divide into teams** of 4-6 per team (if not already in teams)
 - a. Each team should have someone to:
 - i. Get supplies for your team
 - ii. Record data (app or card)
 - iii. Hold garbage bag
 - iv. Hold recycle bag (you can also separate recyclables at the end)



Cleanup volunteers from our Adopt-A-Beach program on Hampton Beach in January 2018.

3. Have “supply person” **get the supplies** for their team from cleanup leader.
4. **Head to the cleanup site!**
 - a) It is usually most efficient to walk to the far end of the site without picking up trash and then pick up trash on your way back, so that you’re not carrying a heavy bag in both directions.
 - b) Cover the whole beach from the water up to the rocks/plants. If you are a large group, spread out and walk in a straight line, doing a “sweep” of the beach.
 - c) Look **CAREFULLY** for trash. It is important to pick up even the smallest piece of plastic or Styrofoam. We go for a quality job, as well as picking up a large quantity!
 - d) Record items on the data card or in Marine Debris Tracker app (see page 8) while you are cleaning
 - e) Do not throw out lobster traps or buoys. Tally them (try to make sure that nobody else tallies the same ones) and pull them up above the high tide mark if possible so they don’t wash back into the ocean. They can’t be removed from the beach in most states due to state laws.
 - f) We usually pile up wood (not driftwood), rather than removing it from the beach. Watch for sharp nails! Wood products made or mixed with synthetic materials or coated with paint can be removed.
 - g) Be careful of sharp items.
 - h) Stay off dunes and beach grass as these are part of a fragile ecosystem.
5. **Weigh your trash.** When you get to the end of your site, bring your trash bag back to the scale to weigh it. Write the amount of trash in your bag (pounds) on the front of the data card, or record in the app. If bringing along a bathroom scale or luggage scale is impossible, please estimate the total weight, and note on your data card that the weight is an estimate.
6. Tally the debris items **AS YOU PICK THEM UP** on the data card or in Marine Debris Tracker. The app records the location of each litter item, so it is important to mark the item as close to where it was found as possible.



In 2011, an accidental spill at the Hooksett Water Treatment Plant in Hooksett, NH released over 4.3 million of these small plastic disks into the marine environment. Look for them at your cleanup! They can be entered at reportdisks.org.

Hampton Beach, NH. April 2016.

Topics to Cover in Introduction to Your Group:

Below are topics to cover before a beach cleanup. Tailor to the group, i.e., provide in-depth points to adults, more basic ideas for children.

- **Thank You** - Thank the volunteers for coming
- **Introduce BOS & Your Goals** - Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation's mission is to protect marine life in the GOM through research, education and inspiring action. We've been doing cleanups since 2001.
 - We have cleanups open to the public year-round, and an Adopt-a-Beach program that involves 20+ groups. In total, BOS does about **200** cleanups in NH, MA and ME each year, removing more than 7,000 lbs of litter
 - Introduce your group's goals for your cleanup and feel free to talk about larger projects that your cleanup may be a part of, whether through your company, school, organization, etc.
- The Cleanup Itself - **Two tasks for you today:**
 1. **Pick up any litter on the beach**, as marine debris is hazardous to wildlife through entanglement or ingestion, and anything left on the beach will wash out into the ocean.
 - A sperm whale died from eating 64 pounds of plastic litter in Spain (February 2018)
 - Beaked whale found dying off coast of Norway with 30 plastic bags in its stomach (2017)
 - Many whales in Gulf of Maine get entangled in fishing gear each year-which is why we work with fishermen on responsibly disposing of gear and fishing line
 2. **Be a scientist for the day**
 - The data you collect today will help us prevent pollution in the future.
 - For example, after picking up lots of fishing line on the beach, we've been installing fishing line recycling bins at area marinas.
 - Data also used by groups looking to do plastic bag bans, education about balloon releases, etc. Our beach cleanup data helped lead to a ban on mass balloon releases in Maine in 2021.
 - Please collect the data **as you're cleaning** (rather than going through the trash afterward). This is especially important when you're using the app, as it tags the location of each piece of litter while you're entering it.

Supplies

- Groups of 4-8
 - Per group:
 - 1 Trash bag
 - 1 Recycling bag
 - 1 Pencil
 - 1 Glove for each person (they can put an extra in their pocket)
 - 1+ person with the app downloaded and signed into the Blue Ocean Society list, or at least one person with a data card.

- Group Leader - make sure to carry extra supplies with you (gloves, bags, pencils if using paper data cards).
- Walk to the end of the beach and clean on the way back!

After the Cleanup – have groups tally their data cards and help consolidate the trash into as few trash bags as possible. Make sure when you weigh the trash, you're holding the bag over the center of the scale as much as possible if using a household scale.

Submitting Your Cleanup Data:

Marine Debris Tracker App – follow instructions on page 8.

Paper Data Cards:

If you are using paper data cards, be sure your data cards are turned in to Blue Ocean Society after your cleanup! We use this data in our marine debris research.

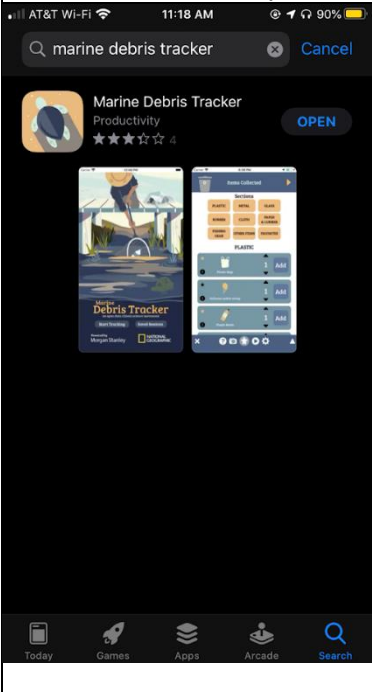
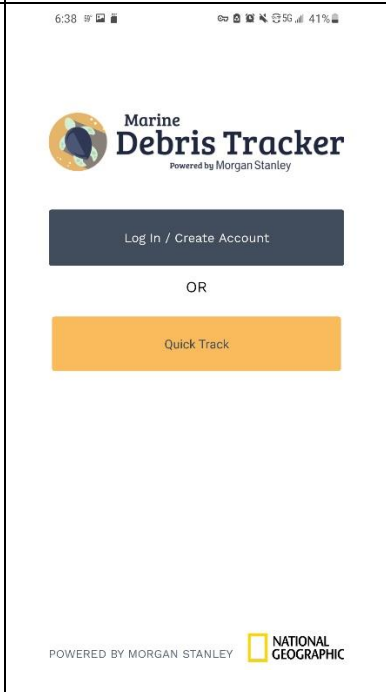
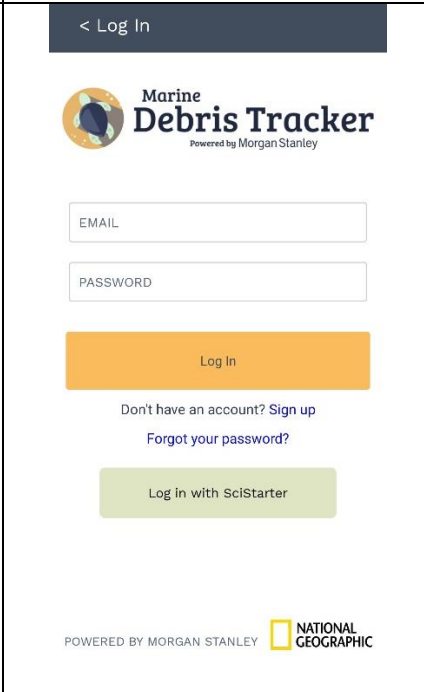
To send us your data cards, please tally all cards onto one master card with totals for each category, and send the master card and all other cards through one of the following options. Make sure the master card is clearly marked:

1. Mail them to: **Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, 400 Little Harbor Road #1103, Portsmouth, NH 03801**
2. Scan both sides and email to: info@blueoceansociety.org
3. Take a clear photo of both sides and email to: info@blueoceansociety.org

(Preferred) Collecting Data with the Marine Debris Tracker App:

If you have access to a smartphone or tablet that you can use during your cleanup, please download and submit data through the Marine Debris Tracker app rather than collecting data on our paper data cards. Please see the instructions below to learn how to use the app.

PLEASE enter the items into the app WHILE you're cleaning the beach. It records the location of each item, which is very helpful to us in determining pollution hotspots! At the end of the cleanup, the data can be submitted from another location (e.g., if you have poor cell service at the beach), but the litter data itself must be collected during the cleanup.

<p>1. Download the app Marine Debris Tracker from the app store or play store on your phone. Available on iPhone and Android phones. Note: it's preferably to download the app and create your account BEFORE you get to the beach. Click Open.</p>	<p>2. Click Login/Create Account</p>	<p>3. Click "Sign Up" next to "Don't Have An Account?"</p>
		

4. Fill out the information to create your account.

< Login

Create an Account

First Name

Last Name

Username

Email

Password

Confirm Password

Submit

5. Click "Select An Organization"

Welcome Back!

Actions

Quick Track

Select an Organization

6. Scroll or search for Blue Ocean Society's logo, click on it to use our list.

< Back

Choose a List

rozmah project

4ocean

GOAL CLEAN SEAS

Heal the Bay

peps

CLEANER OCEAN

ecoblitze

Blue Ocean Society

5GYRES

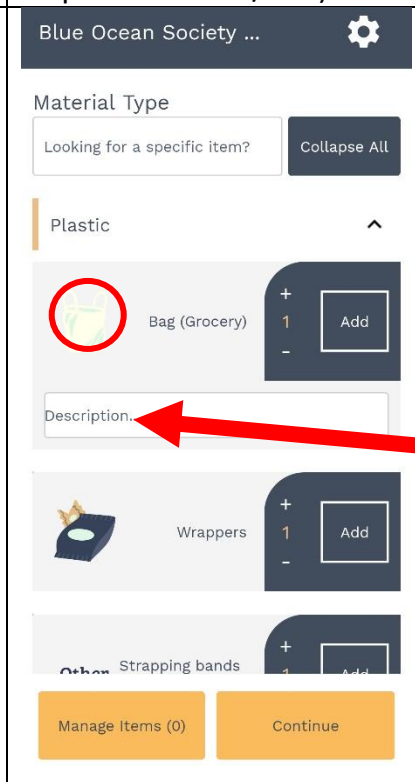
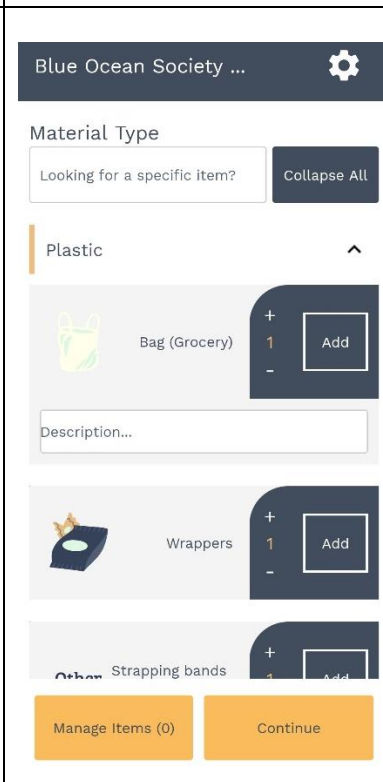
Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful

7. After you click on our logo, you will be brought to this screen, tap on “use this list”. If it asks, “Are You Sure...”, click Continue.

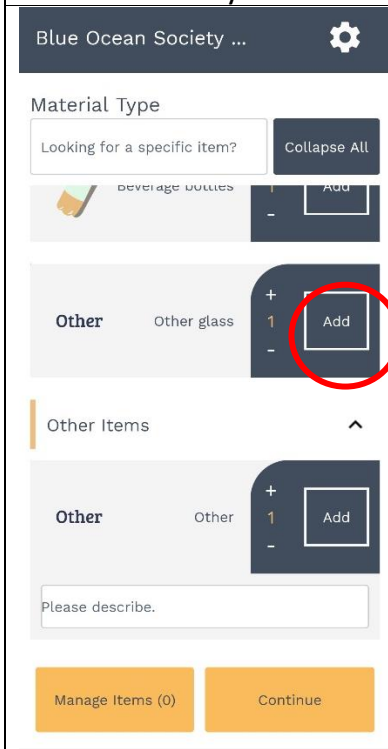
8. Now, the tracking begins! Items are categorized by composition (Plastic, metal, glass, mixed, fragments). You can search for an item in the search box at the top of the screen.

6. If you would like to enter more details, click on the item icon and a box will appear where you can write a description (e.g., if you’d like to include “Market Basket” under Grocery Bag).

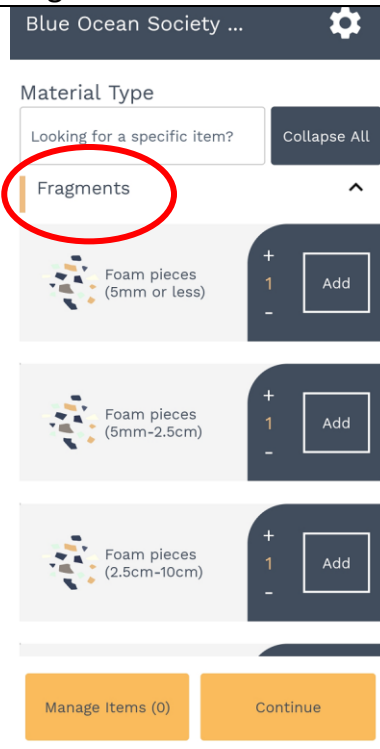
If you find an item not on the list, you can enter it in the **Other** category. Click on the bold word **Other** and scroll down to enter a description of the item (ex: disposable mask/PPE).



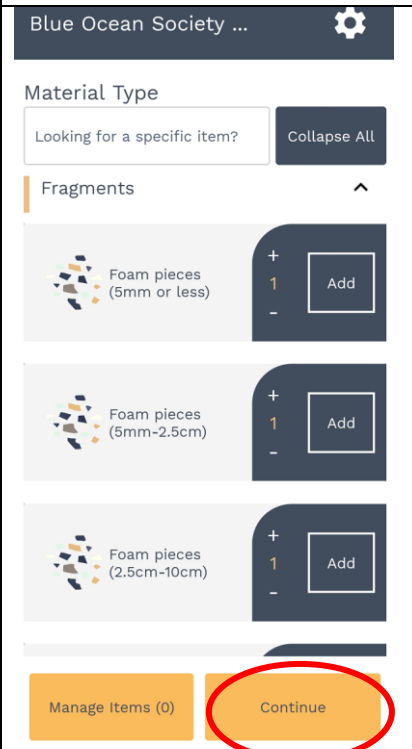
7. As you find debris on the beach, record each piece by tapping on “add”. The total at the bottom left will increase. You can use "Manage Items" to make corrections to your entries.



8. Note that there is a “fragments” category to log tiny pieces of plastic, foam and glass. These small pieces are just as important to collect as large debris.



9. When your cleanup is complete, click Continue.



10. You will see a screen called "User Survey" where you can enter your name, cleanup date, site, cleanup time, pounds of trash, etc.

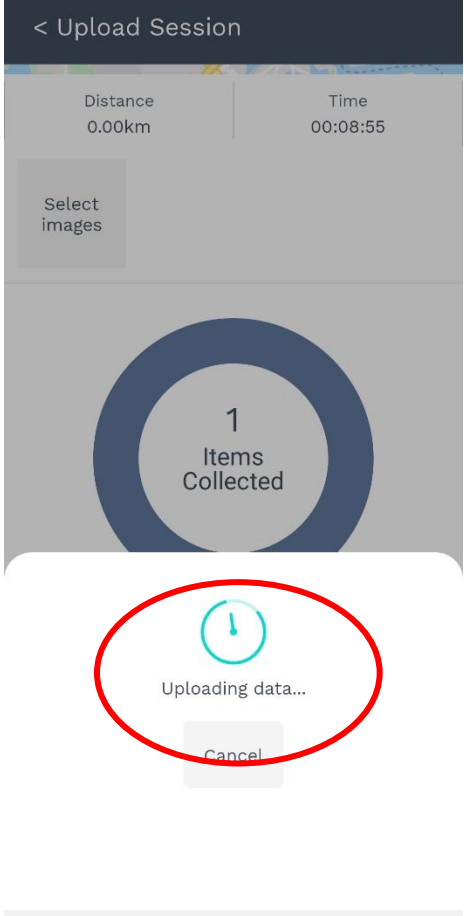
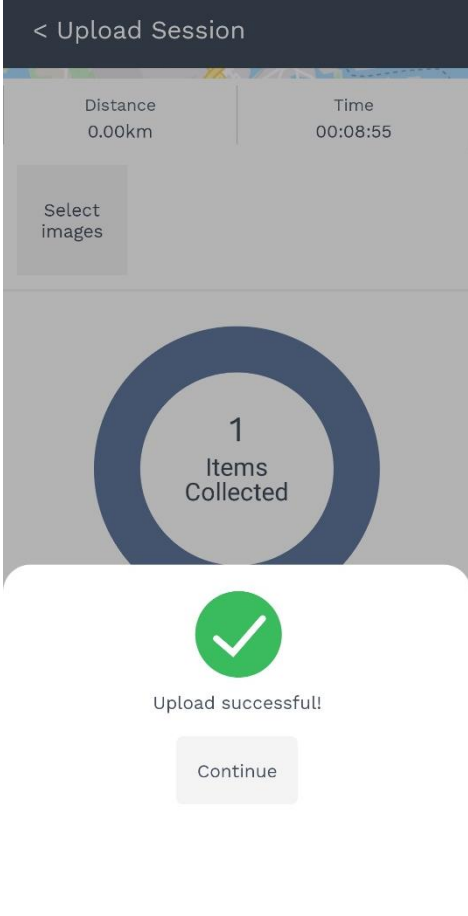
11. **Only one person** should enter the total weight of debris collected and total number of adult and youth volunteers at the cleanup. For example, if two people enter the 5 pounds collected at your cleanup, it will produce an incorrect result and we will think you collected 10 pounds, not 5.

After you have entered all the information, click Save

12. You'll then see a summary screen and be able to upload your session. We cannot access your data until you complete this step!

Click Upload Session. If you have a poor cell signal, you can wait until you have a better one to complete this step. The app will allow you to restore your session when you reopen it later.

<p>< User Survey</p> <p>1. Name <input type="text"/></p> <p>2. Organization/Affiliation (if applicable) <input type="text"/></p> <p>3. Cleanup Date <input type="text"/></p> <p>4. Cleanup Site <input type="text"/></p> <p>5. Cleanup Start Time <input type="text"/></p> <p>Save</p>	<p>< User Survey</p> <p>9. Number of Adults <input type="text"/></p> <p>10. Number of Children <input type="text"/></p> <p>11. Total # of Bags of Trash <input type="text"/></p> <p>12. Total lbs of trash <input type="text"/></p> <p>13. Enter an email address where we can reach you if we have questions <input type="text"/></p> <p>Save</p>	<p>< Upload Session</p> <p>Distance 0.00km Time 00:08:55</p> <p>Select images</p> <p>1 Items Collected</p> <p>1 item - 100%</p> <p>Upload Session</p> <p>Upload Later</p>
---	---	--

<p>13. You'll see a message "Uploading data..."</p>	<p>14. You'll then see "Upload Successful!"</p>	<p>15. THE END!</p>
 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Upload Session' screen with a progress indicator for '1 Items Collected'. A modal dialog is displayed at the bottom, featuring a clock icon and the text 'Uploading data...'. A red circle highlights the clock icon.</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Upload Session' screen with a progress indicator for '1 Items Collected'. A modal dialog is displayed at the bottom, featuring a green checkmark icon and the text 'Upload successful!'. A 'Continue' button is visible below the dialog.</p>	<p>That's it!!! Thank you for contributing to our long-term data set on marine pollution. This information will be used in our education and pollution prevention programs!!</p>

Collecting Data with our Data Cards:

If you choose to collect data on our paper data cards to submit to Blue Ocean Society via mail, please print out one copy per every 3-5 people in your cleanup group. Items on the list below should be tallied as you find them when cleaning the beach. Review this data card with participants prior to the cleanup and answer any questions.



Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation Coastal Debris Monitoring Project Data Card

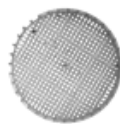
Please answer the following questions and record your data on the back of this card. Return the card to your cleanup director. Completed cards can be dropped off or mailed to: Blue Ocean Society, 143 Pleasant St. Portsmouth, NH 03801

Name: _____
 Group/Affiliation: _____
 Cleanup Date: ____/____/____ Cleanup start time: _____ AM/PM
 Cleanup Site: _____ Cleanup end time: _____ AM/PM
 Current weather: _____
 Notable weather in previous week (storms, winds, etc.): _____
 Other remarks: _____
 Dead/Live/Entangled Animals: _____

Instructions:

- Pick up all the trash and record all items you find. Keep track of the items by making tick marks (### II). Only numbers are useful, avoid using words or check marks.
- If you can tell where a fragment is from, record it as that item (e.g., Record a foam piece clearly from a cup, as a cup.)
- Lobster traps and buoys are the private property of the fisherman and we are NOT allowed to remove them. Please tally these items, although you are not removing them.
- Don't pick up dead animals or anything hazardous. Bring these items to the attention of a BOS staff member.
- If you see a marine mammal (e.g. a seal), tell BOS staff or call the local marine mammal hotline (1-800-532-9551 in ME, 603-997-9448 in NH).

Field Guide to (tricky) Marine Debris:



Hooksett disk:
Plastic round filter with grid. About 1.5 inches diameter.



Strapping band:
Top: closed- band still circular
Bottom: open- band has been cut



Zip-tie/cable tie:
Plastic fastener; may be open or closed



Latex vs. Mylar balloons:
Latex: rubber material
Mylar: foil material



Lobster bands:
Thick, small rubber bands

SUMMARY

Total Volunteers at Cleanup:	Total Trash:
____ Adults	Total # Full Bags of Trash: ____
____ Children (under 12)	Total lbs. of Trash: ____
____ Total Volunteers	

The top portion of your data cards can be filled out before or after your cleanup.

Be sure to go back to this section to add in "Other Remarks" and "Dead/Live/Entangled Animals" notes after your cleanup, if relevant.

Cleanup weather and previous weather are particularly important for our database, so don't forget these!

The "Summary" section should be filled out after your cleanup and should include all indicated fields. Approximate weight is acceptable if a scale is unavailable.

Items are categorized by composition to make them easier to find on the data card.

If you aren't sure what the item is, but know it's made of metal, for example, you can write it in under "other metal". If you can tell a fragment is part of an item on the list, write it under that item (e.g., write a piece of Styrofoam cup as a Styrofoam cup).

If you find an item and you know what it is but it's not on the list, add it to this area, tally up how many you have and total it at the end.

Items Collected						
	Item:	Tally: Example: IIII II = 7	(Avoid words, only numbers are useful!)		Total:	
PLASTIC	Bag (Grocery)					
	Bag (Trash)					
	Bag (zip-lock, produce, other)					
	Beverage bottles					
	Bottle caps					
	Film (thin/flexible e.g. straw wrapper)					
	Fishing line					
	Food containers					
	Hooksett disks					
	Nets (incl. bait bags)					
	Strapping bands	Open: <input type="checkbox"/>		Closed: <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Straws					
	Wrappers					
	Zip ties (cable ties)					
	Non-beverage containers/bottles					
	Other unk. plastic (larger than 10 cm)					
METAL	Beverage cans					
	Bottle caps					
	Other metal					
GLASS	Beverage bottles					
	Other glass					
FOAM	Cups					
	Floats/Buoys					
	Food containers					
	Packaging material					
MIXED MATERIALS	Balloons	Mylar: <input type="checkbox"/>		Latex: <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Cigarette butts/filters					
	Dog Poop	Bagged: <input type="checkbox"/>		Un-bagged: <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Lobster bands					
	Personal hygiene items					
	Rope (larger than 1 meter/yard)					
	Rope scraps (smaller than 1 m/yard)					
	Syringes					
	Traps/pot pieces (do NOT remove)					
OTHER (Add items not on the list)						
Item:	Tally:	Total:	Item:	Tally:	Total:	
FRAGMENTS						
	Smaller than 5 mm	5 mm – 2.5 cm	2.5 cm – 10 cm			
Foam Pieces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Glass Pieces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Plastic Pieces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

In this fragment section you can document tiny trash made of foam, glass or plastic. Use the ruler at the bottom of the page to determine in what section the trash should go. If it's larger than 10 cm and you aren't sure what it is, write it in the "other" section.