

CLEAN BEACHES MONTH

July is Clean Beaches Month

From plankton to whales, animals across ocean ecosystems have been contaminated by plastic.

OCEAN TRASH AFFECTS THE HEALTH OF WILDLIFE, PEOPLE AND LOCAL ECONOMIES. TRASH IN THE WATER AND ON THE SHORE CAN BE MISTAKEN AS FOOD BY WILDLIFE, OR ENTANGLE ANIMALS WITH LETHAL CONSEQUENCES.

Plastic also attracts and concentrates other pollutants from surrounding seawater, posing a contamination risk to those species that then eat it. Scientists are studying the impacts of that contamination on fish and shellfish and as well as the possible impact it may have on human health as well.

How Long Does It Take for Trash in the Ocean to Decompose?

- A tin can that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing in 2036
- A plastic bottle that entered the ocean in 1986 is decomposing in 2436
- A glass bottle that entered the ocean in 1986 is decomposing in year 1,001,986



1) Beach Clean-Ups help the Local Economy –

Beaches are an ideal tourist attraction. By helping maintain the highest standards, and keep our beaches clean, we can ensure that tourists continue to visit local beaches. The revenue generated from the support of tourists is essential to the local population, whose main source of revenue revolves around tourism and fishing. Coastal tourism and commercial fishing are a vital part of the Texas economy, contributing about \$8.9 billion per year.

2) Beach Clean-Ups help keep the Ocean clean too –

Due to tide patterns in the Gulf of Mexico, trash dumped anywhere in the gulf is likely to end up on a Texas beach. During periods of high tide, the ocean may also sweep some of the trash or debris that has been left on the beach back into the sea. This in turn puts marine wild life in danger. Beach clean-ups help reduce this risk towards the survival of marine wild life, and helps the overall marine system remain a little safer and healthier for all.



PLASTIC HAS BEEN FOUND IN 59% OF SEA BIRDS LIKE ALBATROSS AND PELICANS, IN 100% OF SEA TURTLE SPECIES, AND MORE THAN 25% OF FISH SAMPLED FROM SEAFOOD MARKETS AROUND THE WORLD.

3) Beach Clean-Up Volunteers can make a Global difference –

Volunteers through state programs, such as the Texas General Land Office's "Texas Adopt-A-Beach" program, can record information such as the source and type of debris collected on data cards provided by Ocean Conservancy. The data that has been collected over time has been instrumental in the passage of international treaties and laws aimed at reducing the amount of offshore dumping.



4) Beach Clean-Ups and Texas –

The first beach clean-up to be sponsored by the state of Texas occurred in 1986. Since then, over 400,000+ people have volunteered to clean up beaches across Texas, through the "Texas Adopt-A-Beach" program, and have collected over 8,000 tons of trash over a span of twenty-six years. Among the earliest and most renowned beach cleanup in Texas was one organized by Linda Maraniss, a former employee of Ocean Conservancy (then known as the Center for Environmental Education). Being appalled at the amount of trash she saw on a trip to the beaches of South Padre in 1986, she would team up with like-minded people to organize a

beach cleanup. In a mere two hours, 2,800 Texans would pick up 124 tons of trash along 122 miles of coastline.

5) First state-wide Beach Clean-Up in the World –

In 1984, Judy Nielson, an employee of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), would attend a conference on plastics in the marine environment. This conference led her to conceive the idea of statewide volunteer beach cleanups to raise awareness of the proliferation of plastic debris in the environment. The world's first statewide volunteer beach cleanup would be held on October 13, 1984, under the title "Plague of Plastics". Local coastal garbage haulers would volunteer to haul all the collected debris to local landfills at no charge. In all, 2,100 volunteers removed 26.3 tons of debris at that first beach cleanup.

228,919,809
pounds of trash collected since 1985

"Our ocean is sick," says Laura Capps, Senior Vice President at Ocean Conservancy. "And the plain truth is that our ocean ecosystem cannot protect us unless it is healthy and resilient. Harmful impacts like trash in the ocean, pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction are taking its toll. But the good news is that hundreds of thousands of people from around the world are starting a sea change by joining together to clean up the ocean. Trash doesn't fall from the sky it falls from people's hands. With the International Coastal Cleanup, everyone has an opportunity to make a difference, not just on one day but all year long."



Trash in the ocean kills more than one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals and turtles each year through ingestion and entanglement. This year, 81 birds, 63 fish, 49 invertebrates, 30 mammals 11 reptiles and one amphibian were found entangled in debris by volunteers. Some of the debris they were entangled or had ingested include plastic bags, fishing line, fishing nets, six-pack holders, string from a balloon or kite, glass bottles and cans.

Entanglement in Ocean Trash

- Wraps around flippers causing circulation loss and amputations
- Creates wounds and cuts leading to bacterial infections
- Slows animals ability to swim making them more vulnerable to predators
- Smothers or traps animals, causing them to drown
- Causes starvation as animals can no-longer eat or feed its young

Ingestion of Ocean Trash

- Leads to starvation by blocking digestive tracks
- Provides false sense of being full once swallowed, which leads to starvation
- Ingests sharp objects like metal or glass that perforate the stomach, causing internal bleeding
- Becomes lodged in animals windpipes, cutting off airflow and causing suffocation



Tackling the problem of plastic in the ocean begins on land. Reduction in plastics use, especially of single-use disposable products, and the collection and recycling of plastics in developing countries can help to reduce the amount of plastic waste that enters the ocean.

