



Cleanup, and it has grown into an annual event, motivating people the world over to get outside and do something for their coastal environment.

Using What We Learn

The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) doesn't end after the beaches have been cleaned, however. Local coordinators collect raw data from the cleanups, including people participating at each site, pounds of trash picked up, and types and categories of marine debris. The Ocean Conservancy compiles this information and uses it to paint a better picture of marine debris sources, in an effort to actively address the link between human activities and debris. This comprehensive look at the human fingerprint of marine debris helps to educate government, scientists and the public. It's about prevention just as much as it is about cleaning up.

Science, Policy and Healthy Oceans

There are many examples of the ICC's influence. For instance, the Cleanup helped reduce the use of harmful plastic six-pack holders. These holders were once a major threat to marine wildlife, strangling hundreds of fish, seabirds and marine mammals each year. The Ocean Conservancy's early cleanups brought media attention to the issue, and this in turn accelerated industry conversion to photodegradable holders, which are much more environmentally sound. By 1988, they were in wide use throughout the United States, and worldwide by 1990.

ICC data reports have also influenced public policy on waste management and legislation. This includes a 1987 amendment to the international MARPOL treaty, which outlawed ocean dumping of plastics and other items; and most recently, the Marine Debris Research and Reduction Act of 2005, introduced by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) in an effort to reduce our nation's marine debris and improve enforcement. In addition, local resource and waste managers, EPA, the Coast Guard, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration use The Ocean Conservancy's cleanup data as a resource and educational tool for several of their programs.

Today, there are hundreds of cleanups across the United States and around the world. After 20 years, the International Coastal Cleanup is a celebration of healthy oceans. Visit www.coastalcleanup.org for more information.

The International Coastal Cleanup

20 Years of Cleaner Oceans

May 2005



For Media Inquiries and Further Information, Contact:

Tom McCann, Director of Media Relations
(202) 351-0465 tmccann@oceanconservancy.org

Matt Hourihan, Media Relations Coordinator
(202) 351-0482 mhourihan@oceanconservancy.org



Today, over 300,000 citizens from almost 100 different countries participate in the Cleanup, and it has grown into an annual event, motivating people the world over to get outside and do something for their coastal environment.

Charting a Solution to Marine Debris

The Ocean Conservancy's involvement with the worldwide marine debris problem began in 1985, not with a cleanup, but with a groundbreaking study. That year, the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Toxic Substances recruited The Ocean Conservancy (then called the Center for Environmental Education) to conduct a study of plastic marine garbage. The resulting report, *Plastics in the Ocean: More Than a Litter Problem*, was the first to identify plastics as the number one marine debris hazard, and it established The Ocean Conservancy as an authority on the matter.

Later that same year, a staff member of The Ocean Conservancy was appalled at the amount of trash she found littering the shores of South Padre Island, Texas. She organized the Center's first beach cleanup in 1986. In three hours, 2,800 Texans picked up 124 tons of trash from 122 miles of coastline. The Ocean Conservancy's Coastal Cleanup was born.

This event was just the beginning of a movement for cleaner beaches and marine habitats. In a few years, what had been a local cleanup grew to encompass the shorelines of 25 U.S. states and territories. In 1989, the Cleanup officially became an international event, with the involvement of responsible citizens of Canada and Mexico. Today, half a million citizens from almost 100 countries participate in the

Highlights in the Fight Against Marine Debris

A TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1972 LEGISLATION

The U.S. Congress passes the Coastal Zone Management Act, which works to preserve, protect, develop, restore, and enhance the United States' coastal zone resources.

1973/78 LEGISLATION

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78) passes, creating international guidelines to prevent ship pollution. MARPOL has six annexes covering oil discharge, hazardous liquid control, hazardous material transport, sewage discharge, plastic and garbage disposal, and air pollution. Annex V controls the disposal of plastics and garbage into the oceans from ships.

1977 LEGISLATION

Clean Water Act passes, which establishes pollution discharge regulations for U.S. waters, sets water quality standards, and gives the country's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority over pollution control programs.

1985

The Ocean Conservancy conducts a study of plastic marine garbage for EPA. The report, *Plastics in the Ocean: More Than a Litter Problem*, identifies debris made of plastic materials as the number one marine debris hazard.

1986

A Conservancy staff member organizes the first Beach cleanups along the Texas coast. In the three-hour Texas Coastal Cleanup, 2,800 volunteers collect 124 tons of trash from 122 miles of coastline.

1987 LEGISLATION

U.S. Congress passes the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act (MPPRCA) to implement Annex V. Under MPPRCA, it is illegal to throw plastic trash off any vessel within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (within 200 nautical miles of the shoreline). It is also illegal to throw any other garbage overboard while navigating in U.S. waters or within three miles of shore.

1988

The Cleanup expands to include 25 coastal U.S. states and territories. The Ocean Conservancy establishes the National Beach Cleanup Marine Debris Database to create awareness, involve citizens, and collect standardized information on the problem of marine debris nationwide. On December 31st of this year, Annex V of the MARPOL Treaty, which deals with ship-borne garbage, goes into effect.

1989

Canada and Mexico participate in beach cleanups, making the event the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC). Plywood that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

1992

33 countries participate in the Cleanup.

1995

The Ocean Conservancy produces *Victory at Sea: "Zero Discharge" Ship to Shore*, a report on ship waste and discharge at sea, to serve as an industry reference guide in preventing ship-borne marine debris. A plastic trash bag that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

1996

The Ocean Conservancy works with the International Maritime Organization to raise awareness of the importance of good stewardship and the marine debris problem in the Caribbean.

1997

75 countries participate in the Cleanup.

2000 LEGISLATION

Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (B.E.A.C.H. Act) of 2000 amends the Clean Water Act, requiring adoption of minimum health-based water quality criteria, comprehensive water testing, and public notification when water contamination levels are unsafe.

2003

91 countries participate in the Cleanup.

2004

Despite several cancellations due to hurricanes which pushed many cleanups into October, ICC volunteers are still able to collect 7.7 million pounds of debris.

2005 LEGISLATION

Senators Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Ted Stevens (R-AK) introduce the Marine Debris Research and Reduction Act. The bill creates a new marine debris program within NOAA, enhances Coast Guard efforts against marine debris, and enacts a federal marine debris information clearinghouse. A Styrofoam cup that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

2036

A tin can that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

2436

A plastic beverage bottle that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

1,001,986 A.D.

A glass bottle that entered the ocean in 1986 is still decomposing this year.

For more information, or to participate in the International Coastal Cleanup, contact:

The Ocean Conservancy Office of Pollution Prevention and Monitoring
1432 N. Great Neck Road, #103
Virginia Beach, VA 23454
757.496.0920

www.coastalcleanup.org
800.262.BEACH (U.S. only)
cleanup@oceanconservancy.org

International
**Coastal
Cleanup**
The Ocean Conservancy