



Digital Beach Cleanup Kit

Guidelines & Resources for Leading a Beach Cleanup with Your Community



Point32Health Cleanup at Hampton Beach in 2023.



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:

- **Paper Data Cards:** One card should be handed out per team of 4-6 people. It is best to supply clipboards and the cards or print them on 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 is not possible, try reusing large shopping bags, grain/pellet bags, or garbage bags. There should be at least one designated trash and one designated recycling bag per team of 4-6 people.
- **Scale:** Our data collection includes weighing the debris at the end of the cleanup; a luggage scale works well for this.
- **First Aid Kit:** A first aid kit is always handy, just in case.
- **Sharps Container:** If you find a syringe and feel comfortable enough to collect it while wearing your gloves and dispose of it in your sharps container, please do so. Do not collect anything you're not comfortable picking up.

If you borrow one of our cleanup kits, all of these items will be included!

Cleanup Safety:

- **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:**
 - If you feel unsafe picking up an item, please leave it where you found it. While
 - Do not remove lobster traps, lobster gear, 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 start collecting data!**
Tally the debris items AS YOU PICK THEM UP on the data card.
 - 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 while you are cleaning
 - e) Do not touch lobster traps, lobster gear, or buoys, as it is illegal to touch/remove these items. Tally them (try to make sure that nobody else tallies the same ones)
 - f) Make a pile of wood (not driftwood), rather than removing it from the beach. Watch for sharp nails!
 - g) Be careful of sharp items.
 - h) Stay off dunes and beach grass as these are part of a fragile ecosystem.
5. **Add up tallies.** At the end of the cleanup, have the groups add up their tallies and put the totals into the totals section.
6. **Fill out front page of the data card.** After adding up tallies, have each group flip over their data card to start filling out the front page. Remember to have groups only put the number of people in their individual group on the data card, not the entire group or people will be double-counted.
7. **Weigh debris.** As groups are adding up tallies and filling out the front page of their data card, so going around to each group to weigh their bag. Make sure their put the weight (in pounds) on the front of their data card.
8. **Dispose of debris.** Blue Ocean Society is not responsible for the trash collecting by independent cleanup groups. Most state beaches have trash bins, but if not, you will have to dispose of the debris on your own.

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 **300** 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.

Submitting Your Cleanup Data:

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: nikki@blueoceansociety.org
3. Take a clear photo of both sides and email to: nikki@blueoceansociety.org

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!
Hampton Beach, NH. April 2016.

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.): _____

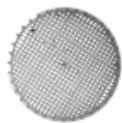
Other remarks: _____

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.