

An Educator's Guide to Beach Cleanups

From the California Coastal Commission



On the third Saturday in September, California's beaches, rivers, lakes, and other waterways are visited by tens of thousands of people intent on having a positive impact on our environment. **Coastal Cleanup Day** is the largest volunteer event in California and is a part of the International Coastal Cleanup, which takes place in 100 countries and 42 U.S. states. Your classroom or youth group can be a part of this monumental event!

If you are unable to arrange for your students to get out to a shoreline cleanup on the Saturday of Coastal Cleanup Day, you can hold your cleanup on the preceding Friday. Please contact your Coastal Cleanup Day coordinator (visit www.coastforyou.org) as early as possible to make arrangements. If you can't get out to a shoreline for a fieldtrip, you can do a Schoolyard Cleanup! Find complete instructions on how to conduct a Schoolyard Cleanup at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/schoolyard/, including lots of educational resources. Yes, you can still record your data and have it included in the Coastal Cleanup Day totals! If trash isn't picked up inland, it may find its way into a storm drain and then out to a waterway and eventually the ocean. All litter is potential "marine debris."

If you would like to participate in beach cleanups year-round, the **Adopt-A-Beach**[®] program is for you! Your local Adopt-A-Beach Manager will help you plan your cleanup or find an existing cleanup taking place in your area. Find your local Adopt-A-Beach Manager by visiting our website at www.coastforyou.org or by calling (800) Coast4U.

The information that follows will provide you with additional resources and activities to enrich a beach or neighborhood cleanup for your students. Please contact us with any comments or questions as you guide your students through this experience: (800) COAST4U; coast4u@coastal.ca.gov.

BYO for Your Cleanup

By planning ahead, you can reduce the waste generated by your cleanup. Following a "Bring Your Own" philosophy will allow you to save plastic bags and gloves that would otherwise be used during trash pick-up. Assign your students to bring work gloves (if available) and an item from home to use in collecting



small trash items. (Larger trash items may need to be carried in bags, or hauled separately.) Some ideas for containers include:

- Reusable bucket
- Half-gallon milk carton, opened
- Cardboard oatmeal cylinder
- Plastic milk jug with the top cut off
- Plastic 2-liter bottle with the top cut off
- Reused plastic shopping bags

As containers are filled, dump them into a central collection site, such as a dumpster, trash can, or large trash bag. The items students brought from home can be recycled after the cleanup, or you can continue to reuse them by providing your students with potting soil and seeds to create a small wildflower or herb planter. Be sure to punch holes in the bottom first to allow for water drainage.



If your students are packing a lunch to eat during the cleanup outing, make it "trash free." This means that students will strive to include no disposable items in their lunches. Some tips:

- Pack lunch in a reusable bag or lunch box.
- Sandwiches can be stored in reusable containers or simply wrapped in a cloth napkin.
- Smaller items can be stored in reusable containers or tied up in a napkin.
- Use a thermos or reusable bottle for drinks.
- Fruit often comes in its own packaging—there's no need for a container for apples, oranges, or bananas.
- Pack cloth napkins and durable utensils when needed.
- Avoid single-use items like paper bags, plastic baggies, chip bags, pudding cups, etc. Families can save money and resources by buying larger packages and sending individual servings in a reusable container.
- Lunch boxes and containers are available for purchase in a range of prices, or food containers and jars can be easily reused to make a free "trash free" lunch kit. Old dish towels can be repurposed as napkins for lunches.
- If you have access to composting, collect any compostable items like fruit peels and take them back to school after the cleanup.



More "trash free" lunch ideas can be found on the following websites:

- www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ReduceWaste/Schools/food/ZeroWaste.htm
- www.epa.gov/epawaste/education/lunch.htm
- www.wastefreelunches.org

Educator Resources

Websites:

The following web pages will provide you with helpful information about participating in a beach cleanup and incorporating related lessons into your classroom:

- California Coastal Cleanup Day: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html
(What, why, when, and how of Coastal Cleanup Day)
- Adopt-A-Beach® Program: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/aab/aab1.html
- Resources for Educators: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/educate.html
(Free curricula, posters, grants, contests, video lending library, and more from the California Coastal Commission)
- The Problem with Marine Debris: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/marinedebris.html
- Bridge Ocean Education Teacher Resource Center: www.marine-ed.org/bridge/
(A collection of online marine education resources, supported by the National Sea Grant Office, the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, and the National Marine Educators Association.)

Books for Classroom Read-Aloud:

- *This is the Ocean*, by Kersten Hamilton, Illustrated by Lorianne Siomades
- *All the Way to the Ocean*, by Joel Harper

Infographic:

- The Ugly Journey of Our Trash by Project AWARE, at www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/TheUglyJourneyofTrashInfographic_PDF.pdf



Slides:

- A few PowerPoint slides about marine debris and its origins, at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/schoolyard/marinedebris.ppt

Classroom Lessons

The following lessons directly relate to your students' experience at a beach cleanup, or provide an opportunity for additional learning on the topic. They can be found in California Coastal Commission publications which are available on the Resources for Educators page of www.coastforyou.org and in hard copy by request. Please visit the website for details.

- Marine Debris: It's Everywhere! - from the Community Action chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*

- Searching Out Nonpoint Sources of Pollution - from the Community Action chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*
- Clean Shorelines, Clean Oceans: Shoreline Cleanup - from the Community Action chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*
- Preventing Pollution at the Source - from the Community Action chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*
- Beaches: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? - from the 6th Grade chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*. Combine this beach profiling activity with your cleanup, particularly if you will be able to visit the same beach on more than one occasion.
- What's So Special About Native Species? - from the 7th Grade chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*. Research an animal you think may be impacted by marine debris.
- You Are What You Eat: Plastics and Marine Life - from the 8th Grade chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*
- Branching Out - from the 5th Grade chapter of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*. Learn about watersheds, so you can understand how marine debris and pollution ends up in the ocean.
- *Save Our Seas* K-12 marine debris curriculum
- Nonpoint Source Pollution - from *Our Wetlands, Our World* High School Activity Guide
- Water Quality - from *Our Wetlands, Our World* High School Activity Guide
- Pollution Observation - from *Our Wetlands, Our World* High School Activity Guide



Marine Debris Videos

Sometimes a video can be just what you need to prepare your students for a new experience, or to further inform them about an issue. Our free Lending Library (see our Resources for Educators web page to make a request) includes a number of titles relating to beach cleanups and marine debris. Please plan ahead, because there is often high demand prior to Coastal Cleanup Day and Earth Day. There is also an extensive list at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/educators.html of marine debris-related videos that are available streaming online.

The following titles are available from our lending library:

- *The Adopt-A-Beach® School Assembly Program* - 21 min. running time, grades 3 and up. From the Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education, this DVD includes excerpts from a live assembly program for students about the sources and impacts of marine debris. 2009.
- *Saving Inky* - 20 min. running time. A video for all ages about a pygmy sperm whale that ingested plastics from the ocean, was treated at the Baltimore Aquarium, and then set free. 1994.
- *The Trash Troll* - 13 min. running time, for grades K-5. Teaches children the impacts of beach trash on marine animals. 1993.
- *Synthetic Sea: Plastics in the Ocean* - 9 min. running time, grades 7 and up. An alarming look at the role plastics is playing in our waters, specifically the Pacific Ocean. 2001.

Creativity

Your students can create art or poetry based on their cleanup experience for the California Coastal Art & Poetry Contest. Find details at www.coastforyou.org under "Contests." Below are just a few questions that might help encourage artwork or poetry.

- What do you do at the beach?
- What do you see at the beach?
- What animals live on the coast or in the ocean off California?
- How are people connected to the ocean?
- What colors can you see at the beach?
- What sounds do you hear at the beach?
- What textures do you feel at the beach?
- Why do you love the beach or the ocean?
- What things may harm the California coast?
- What does the ocean make you think of?
- How does the ocean make you feel?
- How can we protect the ocean?
- Do you have a memory of being at the coast that was special/powerful/sad/comforting/mundane?
- What would California/your life/your community be like without the ocean?
- What is California/your life/your community like because of the ocean?

