

THE FLOW OF... TRASH FREE WATERS

ISSUE 16

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This newsletter is intended to provide the latest information to all of our Trash Free Waters (TFW) partners and friends.

The Flow...of Trash Free Waters is our opportunity to highlight recent successes, as well as shine a spotlight on news and other related items. It is produced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with support from IEc. Mention of commercial products, publications, or Web sites in this newsletter does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by EPA, and shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

HOW'S IT FLOWING?

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Passes Historic Resolution that Launches Negotiations on Global Agreement Addressing Plastic Pollution

On March 2, delegates to the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, Kenya passed a resolution that will commence negotiations on establishing a new global agreement to address the worldwide concern of plastic pollution. The resolution launches an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) that will meet and negotiate the objectives, scope, and terms of the new global agreement. It is expected that the INC will conclude negotiations by the end of 2024. If successfully negotiated, the UN will host a conference where high-level delegates from countries will attend and officially

sign on to the agreement. This marks the first global agreement on environmental issues since the Paris Agreement in 2015. EPA participated virtually on the U.S. delegation to UNEA, assisting the State Department negotiators on the ground in Nairobi with technical matters concerning the resolution language. The global agreement is expected to contain legally binding and non-binding approaches and will address plastic pollution across the full lifecycle, including upstream and downstream solutions. Unique to the resolution, among others, is the specific reference to the importance of lessons learned and best practices of informal



waste collectors which are prevalent in developing countries, especially countries with inadequate formal waste collection systems. EPA will continue to work with the State Department and other federal partners as we work together to negotiate a strong and effective agreement that the U.S. can join.

Forthcoming Microfiber Report to Congress

In collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program (MDP), EPA's Trash Free Waters (TFW) Program is developing a Report on Microfiber Pollution to fulfill the requirements of Sec. 132 of the [Save Our Seas 2.0 Act](#). This report, compiled on behalf of the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee, will provide a definition of “microfiber,” assess the sources, prevalence, and causes of microfiber pollution, and provide recommendations for a standardized methodology to measure and estimate the prevalence of microfiber pollution as well as reduce it. After completing a first draft of the report, EPA TFW and NOAA MDP are now facilitating interagency cooperation on an action plan for how federal agencies and other stakeholders can address microfiber pollution. The final report is scheduled to be released for public comment this summer.



Image by Alison Krejci, Pixabay

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Aquatic Trash Prevention Information and Resources for Stormwater and Solid Waste Practitioners

In 2021, EPA Trash Free Waters, in collaboration with the National Municipal Stormwater Alliance (NMSA), KCI Technologies, and the American Chemistry Council (ACC), held three stakeholder dialogue sessions to identify major challenges that municipal stormwater and solid waste departments face when trying to more effectively address the issue of trash in waterways. These meetings brought together leading stormwater and solid waste professionals from cities and towns across the U.S. The four main challenges identified include:

- 1) Municipalities Lack Funds and/or Staff Capacity to Effectively Control Aquatic Trash;
- 2) Lack of Public Understanding of the Problem of Litter and Aquatic Trash and the True Cost of Waste Management;
- 3) Insufficient Information About Various Interventions that Municipalities Can Take to Reduce Aquatic Trash; and

- 4) Need for Enhanced Regional Cooperation Amongst Neighboring Jurisdictions and Inter-Agency Cooperation Across Government Offices in a Single Locale.

Following these meetings, the project partners compiled an [inventory](#) of existing resources and information that municipalities might find helpful. For each of the four major challenges identified above, the inventory includes several potentially useful reports, tools, and databases that are currently available for public use. NMSA is leading the development of a comprehensive summary report of the outcomes of the three stakeholder meetings, expected later this spring. NMSA also plans to develop and maintain a stormwater management and trash community of practice. Additionally, NMSA will conduct research on the methods and metrics currently being used to measure trash capture and loadings into waterways to improve harmonization and standardization.

Release of the South Atlantic Strategy

EPA Region 4 has recently published a [South Atlantic Strategy \(SAS\)](#) document which aims to help the South Atlantic Region (North Carolina, South Carolina, and the eastern regions of Georgia and Florida) work together with their respective municipalities, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and concerned citizens to explore more effective ways to reduce the amount of litter and mismanaged waste that enters the Atlantic Ocean from regional waterways. Over 150 local stakeholders participated in 6 interactive virtual workshops between April and June 2021. This document contains a summary of their perspectives on 6 region-wide goals:

- 1) Encourage the use of best practices to reduce downstream litter accumulation.
- 2) Form public, private, and philanthropic partnerships to obtain necessary resources for litter capture, reduction, and prevention.
- 3) Standardize trash data so that decision makers in the region can understand

sources and conduits to tailor litter-reduction approaches.

- 4) Encourage source reduction by affecting behavior change and increasing awareness of the impact of upstream communities on coastal areas.
- 5) Ensure that communities enact and enforce laws that prevent and reduce littering.
- 6) Develop and advance access to circular economy models and other sustainable materials management practices.

The strategy also includes an extensive list of potential projects which can be implemented to help meet the 6 goals above. TFW is providing continued technical assistance to EPA Region 4 to support two additional meetings this Spring to regroup with stakeholders and identify local project champions to guide implementation of project concepts as resources become available. EPA and the SAS stakeholders will work to develop a mechanism for tracking implementation and fostering peer-to-peer learning.



Cover of the EPA Region 4 South Atlantic Strategy for Trash Free Waters document.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Trash Free Mystic Implementation

In Spring 2021, TFW provided technical assistance to EPA Region 1 and the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) to host three public sessions with dozens of local municipal staff, community leaders, representatives of nonprofits, and volunteers to discuss how to reduce the harmful inflow of trash into the Mystic River. Coming out of the sessions, partners developed [three promising project concepts](#) to address litter and mismanaged waste in the watershed, including:

- 1) A trash assessment to better understand where the trash that goes into the Mystic River and its tributaries comes from, with the ultimate goal of developing strategies that will have the greatest impact on trash reduction.
- 2) Inlet guard installment and street sweeping enhancements to help municipalities in the Mystic River Watershed identify and implement

infrastructure installation and maintenance best practices that will reduce trash going into the waterways.

- 3) A stormdrain stewardship program (Adopt-a-Stormdrain) to engage volunteers, raise public awareness, and change behaviors to reduce the amount of trash going into stormdrains and to educate the public about the complexities of stormwater management and trash pollution.

Project partner MyRWA then developed a more specific project proposal for each of the above agreed-upon concepts for submission to various funding opportunities. MyRWA was recently selected as a recipient of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Municipal Assistance 2021 Grant Program and will be awarded over \$30,000 to implement the above stormdrain steward-

ship program watershed-wide. The Mystic River Stormwater Education Collaborative, a group of towns and cities in the watershed dedicated to the common goal of reducing stormwater pollution in accordance with MS4 requirements, was consulted on the grant application. Officials from 13 local municipalities expressed their support for the project and have indicated interest in helping expand the program to their communities. The project will include the creation of individual Adopt-a-Drain web portals in each participating municipality, marketing and outreach to help publicize the project and educate residents on stormwater management issues, and evaluation and maintenance of municipal databases and a watershed-wide map. MyRWA continues to pursue funding for the additional projects identified through the Trash Free Mystic stakeholder engagement initiative.

REGIONAL PROJECT SUCCESSES

Launch of "Trash Blows" Anti-Littering Campaign in Mobile, Alabama

The ["Trash Blows! Stow It!" Campaign](#) has been re-launched thanks to a partnership between Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, the City of Mobile, Partners for Environmental Progress, Dog River Clearwater Revival, and several other local partners. This campaign has now expanded upstream from its original implementation in 2018 in the Town of Dauphin Island, located near the entrance to Mobile Bay. The goal of the initiative is to educate motorists and encourage them to stow their trash before it becomes litter. Motor-

ists can reduce the chances of their trash becoming roadside litter by disposing of their waste before driving, installing a trash receptacle in their vehicle, and signing the "Trash Blows! Stow it!" pledge.

This effort is included in a recent video production titled ["Altering the Course: A Journey Toward Trash Free Waters Along the Alabama Coast,"](#) a 7-minute video highlighting the history of estuary-lead action on the local litter problem, dating back to 2011.



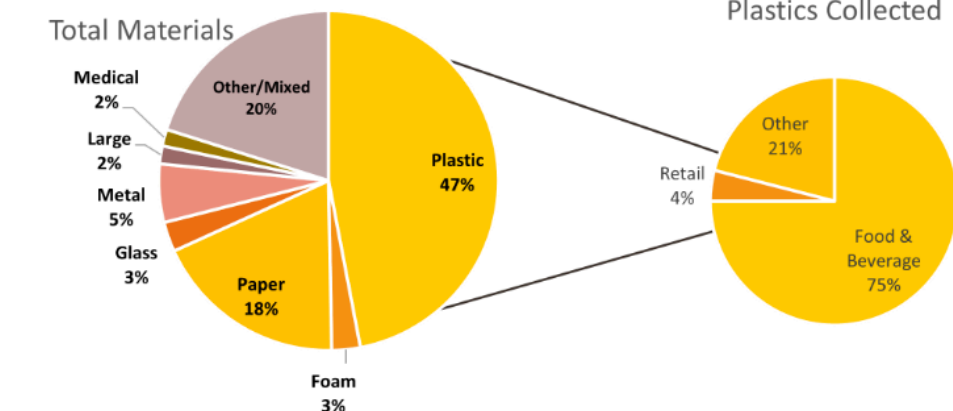
The "Trash Blows! Stow It!" campaign logo.

REGIONAL PROJECT SUCCESSES

Litter Study Findings in Wichita, Kansas

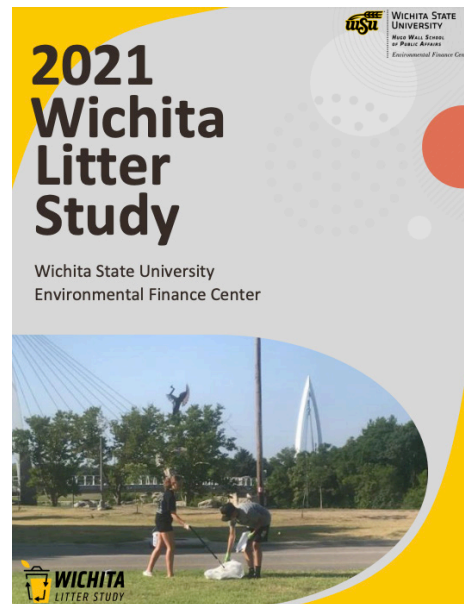
The Environmental Finance Center at Wichita State University (EFC) recently released a [report](#) characterizing the findings of the Wichita Litter Study, funded by EPA Region 7's Land, Chemical, and Redevelopment Division. Data collected during the study provides insight into the types of litter commonly produced, potential sources, and environmental characteristics that may be linked to amounts of litter present. In June and July of 2021, 70 local citizen scientists partook in 24 cleanup events across 12 parks within the city limits of Wichita – cleanups took place at 12 sites, 6 weeks apart. Volunteers were [trained](#) in EPA's Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol and collected and categorized 1,765 pieces of litter (> 4 inches) by material type and item type. An additional 30 gallons of litter were smaller than 4 inches and collected in containers before being measured by volume, but were not individually categorized. 47% of the litter collected was plastic, of which 75% were food and beverage wrappers and containers. Forty-nine percent (49%) of tallied litter data were from the food and beverage industry. Between the first and second collection events, approximately six weeks, there was an overall net increase in both tallied litter data (> 4 inches) and volume litter data (< 4 inches); however, some parks had increases in litter while others had decreases.

Data analyses support the hypothesis that where people congregate (e.g., pavilion/



Above: Wichita Litter Study findings highlighting the material type breakdown of collected litter items. Below: Cover of the 2021 Wichita Litter Study, funded by EPA Region 7.

picnic areas; parking lots), more litter is found despite the presence of trash bins. The Litter Study can be used to draw general conclusions that guide further action to address littering behavior. Recommendations for prevention and reduction of litter included in the study include: continued research into long-term solid waste management adjustments, exploring adaptations to landscaping and maintenance plans, adopting the use of reusable beverage cups and food containers, enacting new policies, and community outreach and education. This publicly available report was shared with the City Council and City of Wichita Plastic Bag Task Force as a resource for decision making and future initiatives.



Trash-Related Projects Funded in Long Island Sound

On December 6, 2021, the EPA, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation announced 39 [Long Island Sound Futures Fund grants](#) totaling \$5.4 million to improve

the health and ecosystem of Long Island Sound. Projects are expected to remove over 97,000 pounds of marine debris from the Sound and restore 25 acres of critical habitat for fish and wildlife. One project, "Reducing Marine Debris in Long Island Sound Deploying Innovative Floating Litter Traps" will provide \$81,341 to Cornell

Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to deploy "Seabin" floating litter traps in Oyster Bay and Hempstead Harbor, New York. Cornell is also the recipient of an additional \$115,841 to remove derelict lobster fishing gear from 18 square miles of marine waters in Connecticut and New York.

REGIONAL PROJECT SUCCESSES

Trash Removal in the Great Lakes

The FY2020 Trash-Free Great Lakes Grant Program, made possible through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), funded several projects which emphasized and encouraged outreach and community involvement in cleanup activities. In 2021, 7 grant recipients enhanced a total of 20,500 acres of coastal habitat, engaged over 14,545 volunteers, and removed more than 125,350 pounds of trash through cleanups in the Great Lakes watershed. One grant recipient, the Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps, continues to cater cleanups for teams of elementary and high school students and provide engaging educational curriculum and experiential learning activities in collaboration with the Racine Unified School District, the Racine Health Department, and other public schools in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Sheboygan counties. Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps training participants are hired as Peer Mentors and disadvantaged young adults are encouraged to participate to engage in leadership roles as they become advocates and role models for next-generation conservationists. Future work includes continuing collaboration with

private school partners and youth-serving organizations. Project partners expect to exceed their initial goal of repairing and removing trash from 3,000 acres of beaches, harbors, and riparian corridors in southeastern Wisconsin by the grant's end.

A second FY2020 Trash-Free Great Lakes grantee, the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, has focused project efforts on the Kalamazoo River area (Eastern Lake Michigan) to educate and engage underrepresented volunteers from low income and minority populations about trash pollution. The project has already achieved 161% of their target number of acres impacted by cleanups and partners plan on hosting an additional 10 cleanup events before the end of the grant.

In September 2021, an additional \$727,130 was awarded to partners in the watershed through the FY2021 GLRI TFW RFA. The City of Erie, Pennsylvania and the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh will be using the funds to install trash collection devices and purchase a trash skimmer boat, respectively, to keep litter and mismanaged waste out of Lake Erie and Lake Michigan.

“Keep the Sea Free of Debris: A Program for Teens in Underserved Communities”

Florida Atlantic University (FAU) has recently used funding awarded through the FY20 South Florida Geographic Initiatives Program to establish a new “Keep the Sea Free of Debris” Junior Ambassador program in St. Lucie County, Florida. This program hopes to educate disadvantaged teens about marine debris, empower them to be advocates for the ocean, and inspire environmental stewardship. FAU began this effort by surveying 19 locations in the county: five adjacent to freshwater canals, eight along the Indian River Lagoon and six on Atlantic Ocean beaches. They found that debris was most abundant on the shores of the Indian River Lagoon (estuary), followed by ocean shores, and then the banks of freshwater rivers. Following this initial survey, FAU revisited a selection of the sites for three weeks to assess change in litter over time, finding that the amount and distribution of trash remained consistent at each location from week to week and concluding that these

sites would be suitable locations for camp beach clean-up sessions.

Over a two-week pilot period, FAU hosted a total of six day-long camp sessions and engaged a total of 144 children (ages 9-19) from disadvantaged communities throughout St. Lucie County. The teens removed a total of 4,623 pieces (over 618 pounds) of debris from local beaches and created 75 debris art displays. An initial query revealed that 77% of participants were surprised by the marine debris that they found in their community during the program. In addition, more than three-fourths of the participants indicated interest in attending the full week-long camp planned for this summer.

Through these combined efforts, FAU and camp attendees removed and recorded 7,731 pieces (approximately 717 pounds) of trash from local beaches. Plastics made up the majority (70%) of the debris collected, with cigarettes being the most abundant single item.

EPA Region 8 TFW Tribal Program Handbook

The Trash Free Waters team in EPA's Region 8 office (including Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming) has developed a [handbook](#) to assist Tribal governments, Indigenous communities, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement projects that reduce trash in waterways on Tribal lands. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to trash pollution, this handbook provides basic information on project design, implementation, and funding to serve as a starting point for those interested in taking action to reduce escaped trash in their community. This resource was developed specifically for Region 8 Tribes, but much of the information related to project development and funding opportunities may be helpful to tribal and other communities outside of Region 8 as well.

REGIONAL PROJECT SUCCESSES

BP Restoration Funds Used for Trash-Related Efforts

The Coastal Marine Extension Program at Mississippi State University (MSU) is overseeing a pilot [Strategic Stream Litter Mitigation Project](#) that has deployed four Litter Gitters, an in-stream trash capture device, in several Mississippi Coast waterways. These traps were installed in December 2021 via \$162,150 in funding from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality from BP Deepwater Horizon catastrophe restoration funds. MSU is using the EPA's Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) tool to compile data on the amount and types of litter and debris collected through the traps.

This initiative helps expand on existing trash capture efforts which were funded by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program last summer, including the installation of two Litter Gitters in Keegan Bayou and Bayou Auguste, outside of Biloxi, Mississippi. This project is also using ETAP to count and categorize trash captured in the initial two traps, which have reportedly collected several hundred pounds of litter already.



A screengrab from a video of Dr. Eric Sparks of MSU speaking about the significance of the Strategic Stream Litter Mitigation Project.

Keep The Gulf Clean: A Regional Collaborative to Promote Trash Free Watersheds

Groundwork New Orleans received over \$491,000 as a recipient of the FY19 Gulf of Mexico Trash Reduction and Prevention grant program. Groundwork New Orleans has since partnered with Groundwork Dallas and Groundwork Mobile County to implement the "Keep the Gulf Clean" project to both remove trash from urban drainage systems and provide community education on trash prevention.

The project seeks to improve water quality and restore crucial habitats by encouraging green infrastructure and other best water management practices in three Gulf of Mexico watersheds: Mississippi River/Lake Pontchartrain Basin, Trinity River and Galveston Bay, and Mobile Bay. This project also directly improves resilience of coastal communities by engaging youth, community members and businesses in trash prevention and reduction; developing outreach and education programs about nonpoint source pollution and the impacts of trash on local waterways; and sharing and communicating best practices and lessons learned between these disparate Gulf communities.

By establishing a long-term collaboration between organizations along the Gulf Coast, the project is extending its impact and reach to other coastal communities by developing replicable strategies for reducing nonpoint source pollution and engaging communities. As of December 2021, the project had educated and engaged 1,217 individuals, strengthened 7 communities, enhanced 485 acres, and removed approximately 35,192 pounds of trash from Texas, Louisiana and Alabama.

In January, Groundwork New Orleans teamed up with local partners to host a "Culture of Cleanliness" campaign kickoff event to inspire community members, local government, and businesses to help establish a clean, litter-free culture to compliment the food, music, and Mardi Gras culture New Orleans is already known for.

View additional EPA Gulf of Mexico Division successes in the [2021 Annual Report](#).

Two FY21 EPA Gulf of Mexico Division TFW Grant Recipients Announced

Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida was recently awarded \$499,638 in funding through the EPA's FY21 Gulf of Mexico Division Healthy and Resilient Gulf RFA to implement their "Communities Count: Single-Use Plastic Data to Change Policy" project by creating a mobile application that will help Pinellas County residents digitally track their single-use plastic consumption with the goal of keeping waste out of the Gulf of Mexico.

A second grant recipient, Louisiana State University, just received \$499,582 to carry out their "Multi-Pronged Approach to Trash Free Watersheds in Baton Rouge" project. This effort will help reduce and prevent surface trash on city streets by engaging and empowering communities and businesses to implement water-filling stations and replace unsustainable products.

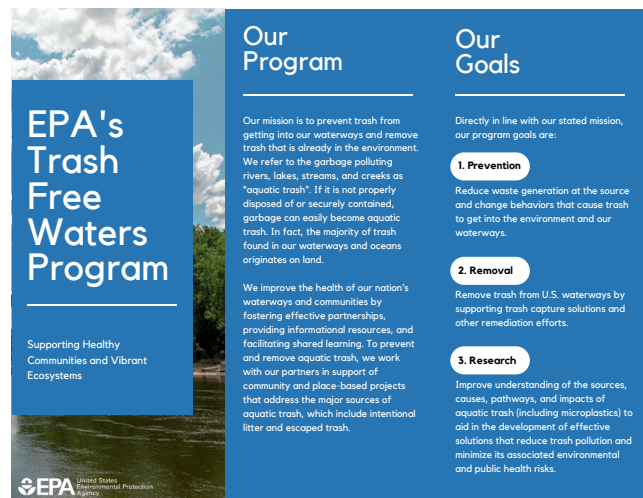
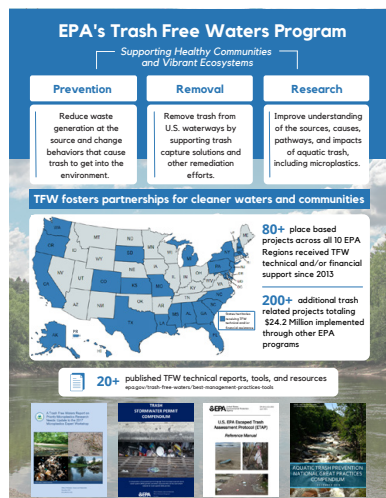
The official EPA news release announcing all eight Gulf TFW grant finalists is expected soon.

NEW RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

TFW Program Trifold and Factsheet

The TFW team recently designed a [trifold](#) brochure outlining the TFW program’s mission, goals – prevention, removal, and research – services, and achievements. The intention of this resource is to help educate partners about TFW as a voluntary, non-statutory program. The resource is available in both electronic and printable format on our website.

A [factsheet](#) highlighting TFW program accomplishments is also available online. Since the program’s creation in 2013, TFW has provided technical and/or financial assistance to over 80 projects in more than half of the U.S. states and



Front page of the TFW Program factsheet. Front page of the TFW Program Trifold.

territories. The TFW Program has also published over 20 technical reports, tools, and resources to help on-the-ground stakeholders address aquatic trash pollution in their communities.

A TFW Report on Priority Microplastics Research Needs: Update to the 2017 Microplastics Expert Workshop

In June 2017, the TFW Program convened a workshop that brought together subject matter experts in the fields of environmental monitoring, waste management, toxicology, ecological assessments, and human health assessments to discuss and summarize the risks posed by microplastics to ecological and human health. The resulting workshop report outlined priority scientific information needs within four broad categories of research:

- 1) Field and analytical methods;
- 2) Sources, transport, and fate;
- 3) Ecological assessments; and
- 4) Human health assessments.

In December 2021, TFW published an [update](#) to the 2017 Microplastics Expert

Workshop (MEW) report to assist the scientific research and funding communities in identifying information gaps and emerging areas of interest within microplastics research. This report includes a status update on the state of the science for each of the four categories listed above, informed by conversations with 11 subject matter experts and a targeted review of the peer-reviewed literature. The document also highlights factors which have led to an increased understanding of microplastics since 2017, including several significant conferences and workshops, a large growth in the number of microplastics-related research papers, and external drivers like the Save Our Seas Act 2.0 and U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Global Issue of Marine Litter.



Update of the TFW MEW Report on Priority Microplastics Research.

NEW RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

TFW Webinar on Successful Campaigns

The Trash Free Waters Program’s January 20th [webinar](#) - titled “Outreach and Education for Trash Free Waters – What Makes a Successful Campaign?”- drew 230 attendees from local, state, and federal government offices, NGOs, universities, and businesses. The webinar featured three expert speakers – Adam Lindquist, Director of the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore’s Healthy Harbor Initiative; Katie Register,

Executive Director of Clean Virginia Waterways of Longwood University; and Ellie Moss, Founder and Principal at Moss and Mollusk Consulting and primary author of [“Reducing Plastic Pollution: Campaigns That Work”](#)- who discussed lessons learned and best practices for outreach campaigns aimed at preventing aquatic trash. The speakers provided the audience with practical information on how to craft an

effective anti-littering or source reduction outreach campaign and discussed common barriers to achieving desired behavior changes and strategies for overcoming these barriers. The TFW team received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the quality and usefulness of this webinar, which is the seventh installment in the TFW webinar series.

Curbside Disposal Education Pilot Campaign Case Study Report


The [“Cleaner Communities and Waterways” Curbside Disposal Pilot](#) took place from July 2020 to May 2021 in Washington, D.C. through a partnership between the EPA’s Trash Free Waters Program and the local district government, including the D.C. Mayor’s Office of the Clean City (MOCC), D.C. Department of Public Works (DPW), and D.C. Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). The primary goal of this initiative was to educate residents about proper waste containment and encourage behavioral changes to reduce

unintentional leakage associated with curbside municipal trash collection. A total of 8,000 DPW-serviced, single-family homes in four target D.C. neighborhoods were selected to receive a campaign sticker articulating four simple actions to reduce unintentional trash spillage. After 22 weeks of data collection in the target communities, our analysis suggests that this educational pilot program had an overall positive impact. In particular, there was a statistically significant reduction in the number of overflowing and open cans across all

neighborhoods – behaviors which were specifically mentioned on the campaign sticker due to their correlation with trash spillage. An executive summary is available on the TFW website for a quick overview of the project scope and findings. A more thorough review of the data collection methodology, analysis, results, and recommendations coming out of this pilot is also available for those interested in adopting a similar campaign approach in other communities.

**Cleaner communities
and waterways
start here**



-  **Keep lid closed and do not overfill the can.**
-  **Bag your trash before putting it in the can.**
(Do not bag recyclables; place items loose in your blue can.)
-  **Place trash in can outside shortly before pickup.**
-  **Call 311 or visit 311.dc.gov for assistance with cans needing repair or replacement.**

#TrashFreeDC
cleancity.dc.gov
zerowaste.dc.gov



In partnership with the U.S. EPA’s Trash Free Waters program
www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters

The sticker design shared with 8,000 select D.C. residents to encourage proper waste disposal practices.

OTHER

VA Stormwater and Litter Conference

In December 2021, Layne Marshall of the TFW Program presented on the EPA's Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) to participants of the annual Clean Virginia Waterways [Stormwater & Litter Workshop](#). Workshop participants were also informed about the 2021 Stormwater and Solid Waste Dialogues and the Trash Stormwater Permit Compendium, a useful tool for Phase I and Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit writers and stormwater management planners interested in how to insert effective trash measures into their planning documents.

Upcoming 7th International Marine Debris Conference

The [7th International Marine Debris Conference \(7IMDC\)](#) is being held September 18-23, 2022, in Busan, Republic of Korea. This is the world's longest-running international conference series dedicated to the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution. 7IMDC will build on the momentum of past IMDCs by bringing together governments, industry, academia, civil society, and all relevant stakeholders, to discuss the latest science, strengthen collaborations, find solutions and catalyze action to address the urgent, global problem of marine litter and plastic pollution. Participants will be able to submit abstracts and posters, attend technical sessions and join field activities to learn more about these global issues. The call for technical sessions has already closed, but attendees can expect sessions in a variety of categories, from monitoring and research and technology and innovation to circularity and private sector engagement. 7IMDC is accepting submissions of abstracts and posters until April 8. Conference registration is expected to be made available soon. The official conference program is scheduled to be announced on June 1.



**7TH INTERNATIONAL
MARINE DEBRIS
CONFERENCE**
18th - 23rd September 2022
BUSAN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Nurdle Patrol Update

[The Nurdle Patrol](#) has performed 11,708 surveys since it began three years ago. Thanks to the help of more than 142 partner organizations and over 5,000 volunteers, they have surveyed 5,074 different sites across Gulf of Mexico-area beaches, riverbanks, and lake shorelines. In November 2021, Nurdle Patrol was awarded the [2021 Conservation & Environmental Stewardship Award for Coastal Community](#) by the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation for their work educating and advocating about plastics in the ocean, engaging citizen scientists in data monitoring efforts, and helping push plastic pellet policy changes along the Gulf Coast. Congrats!

Recommended Reading

Launch of the Inaugural Annual Trends in Plastics Policy: A Brief

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ocean innovator – Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions – recently launched the inaugural [Annual Trends in Plastics Policy: A Brief](#). The updated report highlights key trends and gaps in government approaches to plastic pollution, including initial observations on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the development and implementation of policies intended to address plastic pollution. The report also provides details on which plastic types are and are not being targeted and the types of instruments governments are commonly using. It comes as global policymakers convene

during UNEA 5.2 to set an agenda for the development of a global plastics treaty and consider the capacity that each member state has to implement comprehensive plastics policy. This report complements the [Global Plastics Policy Inventory database](#). A [webinar](#) in late February helped launch the report.

Global Plastics Outlook: Economic Drivers, Environmental Impacts and Policy Options

In February, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) launched the [Global Plastics Outlook: Economic Drivers, Environmental Impacts and Policy Options](#). This Outlook is the first report to comprehensively take stock of current plastics production, use and waste generation, uncover the underlying economic drivers and map the related environmental impacts on a global level. The report quantifies the current production, use, disposal and key environmental impacts throughout the entire plastics lifecycle and identifies opportunities for reducing the negative externalities. It also investigates how plastics use and waste have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic across sectors and regions. The report identifies four key levers that are essential to bend the plastics curve:

- 1) markets for recycled (secondary) plastics,
- 2) technological innovation in plastics,
- 3) domestic policy measures and
- 4) international co-operation, including international financing.

This resource will help decisionmakers assess which policies can support a more sustainable and circular management of plastic materials. An [interactive data dashboard](#) is also available, offering a snapshot on the full lifecycle of plastics across the world, including: production, use, waste generation, and waste management, including waste that is mismanaged or leaked to the environment.