

OCEAN CONSERVANCY

# Arctic Cleanup Toolkit





More than  
**17**  
million  
volunteers  
have collected  
**350+**  
million  
pounds of trash

Every year during Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC), hundreds of thousands of volunteers comb lakes, rivers and beaches around the world for trash. Since 1986, volunteers have collected information on 413 million marine debris items.

Through the ICC, Ocean Conservancy has been working with partners across the Arctic to remove marine litter from some of the most remote and unique shorelines in the world. Ocean Conservancy's Trash Free Seas® and Arctic Programs are excited to be expanding our efforts through the new **Arctic Cleanup**.

The Arctic Cleanup aims to connect communities across the Arctic region in the fight against plastic pollution by supporting the removal of trash from beaches and waterways while raising awareness through data collection and storytelling.

This Arctic Cleanup Toolkit will help guide you through the process of planning and implementing a cleanup in your area, during the time of year that makes sense for you.



Photo Credit: Alessandro Zoni

# Before the Cleanup



## Step 1

# Identify the Goal

The first step in planning a successful cleanup is to identify what you hope to achieve. Identifying the goal -or goals- of your effort will help you map out the logistics of the event. It's okay to have multiple goals, and often most cleanups do! Some possible cleanup goals include, but are not limited to:

- Removing marine debris
- Restoring habitat
- Engaging the community
- Raising awareness
- Educating students
- Collecting data
- Conducting research

In addition to identifying a goal(s), it is important to determine the type of cleanup that you're planning – is it a community-based cleanup close to town, a local day trip to a remote beach, or a multi-day trip to a more distant shoreline or island? The amount of funding you have and your cleanup goals may determine the type of cleanup you're planning.

### Planning Timeline

Regardless of the type of cleanup you're planning, we suggest giving yourself ample time to coordinate the logistics of the cleanup event. Renting equipment, securing a vessel, getting the required permitting in place and making sure you have all the supplies and food for the event can take **weeks to months**. Of course things can change last minute due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, but having a solid plan in place will mean less stress for you and your volunteers and a successful cleanup event!



## Step 2

# Select a Location

Identify beaches or waterways in your area that could be cleaned and align with your cleanup goals. Contact any Tribal, local, state or federal agencies that oversee the cleanup location to make sure you have the necessary permission to be there. Some areas may be closed during certain times of the year due to animal breeding or nesting seasons, so be sure to do some research and check in with local experts ahead of time.

Some additional questions to keep in mind when selecting a cleanup location:

- Would this location be safe for your group of volunteers to collect trash?
- Is the location accessible for all types volunteers?
- How will volunteers get to the cleanup site?
- How far from the nearest community is the cleanup site?
- Are there any safety hazards?
- What should be done to prevent harming the environment while conducting a cleanup in this spot?

If possible, visit the site in advance of the cleanup date to determine:

- What type of debris is present
- What areas volunteers will clean
- Where to set up a check-in station or central meeting location
- Where to compile debris



### Step 3

## Identify Participants

Who will participate in your cleanup event? Depending on the location and goals of your cleanup, you may want to target a specific audience or you may want to publicize the cleanup more broadly to engage the local community and general public.

- If you're inviting a specific audience, such as a school group or an organization, be sure to provide all details in advance of the cleanup so your participants know what to expect and how to prepare.
- If the cleanup is open to the general public, be sure to create a calendar invite or a Facebook event so interested volunteers can RSVP and you can easily communicate with attendees. Spread the word by hanging up flyers in town, putting a PSA on the radio and in the local paper, sending an email invitation and posting on social media. Encourage others in the community to get involved and help organize the cleanup.

### General Tips

Meet ahead of time with other dedicated volunteers to plan the event and assign roles. Depending on your event, you might want to pre-assign a couple people to help with coordination and early set-up, checking in volunteers, taking photos during the event and helping with take-down and disposal. In your outreach, make sure to mention Ocean Conservancy's data collection app, [Clean Swell](#), or the [Arctic Ocean Trash Data Card](#) so that interested volunteers can download the app or view the paper data card in advance of the cleanup.

### Sample Event Description

"[We/I] strongly believe that no matter where we live, our ocean and waterways support and improve our lives. Today, plastic is found in all corners of the world, from the sea surface to the seafloor to the most remote shorelines in the Arctic. That's why we're partnering with Ocean Conservancy to help keep our ocean and waterways clean, and we'd like you to join us! [Your Group] is hosting a cleanup at [Location] on [Date and Time], where we can all get together and work toward a common goal. Come by [Location] to pick up the Arctic Ocean Trash Data Card in advance of the event to get a better idea of how to collect data while cleaning. Information collected during our cleanup will contribute to a global database that gives insight into this ever-growing problem while also helping inspire real solutions. Hope to see you there!"



### Step 4

## Coordinate Transportation

The type of cleanup that you're planning - a community-based cleanup close to town, a local day trip to a remote beach, or a multi-day trip to a more distant shoreline or island - may determine what type of transportation is needed to get you and your volunteers to the cleanup location and the type of transportation needed to get the debris from your cleanup site to a disposal facility.

### Transportation to the cleanup site

If you are planning for a cleanup on a remote beach or island, you may need a vessel, plane/helicopter, or all-terrain vehicle to access the site. If the cleanup is close to your community, you may be able to walk, hike or use cars/trucks to get to the site. Keep in mind that the type of transportation needed may impact how many participants can join your cleanup. If it is a remote cleanup, be sure to find out the maximum vessel or plane/helicopter capacity before recruiting volunteers.

## Transportation of debris from cleanup site

Depending on your cleanup location, you may need additional support transporting the collected debris to the nearest community or disposal facility (more on disposal later). Some questions to think through when planning for transportation of debris:

- If this is a vessel-based cleanup, how will you get the debris from the shore to the vessel? Is an additional raft needed to shuttle debris?
- If this is a hike/walk-in cleanup, can you safely carry the debris from the cleanup site? What is the distance of the walk/hike and is this reasonable and safe to expect volunteers to do?
- If this is a plane/helicopter-based cleanup, what do you need to package the debris so it can be safely and securely flown to the nearest community?
- If the cleanup site is accessible by car/truck, your transportation logistics are much simpler! Be sure to bring straps to secure the debris in the vehicle so it doesn't fly out.

**NOTE:** Be sure to remind volunteers that depending on the transportation you have arranged, you may not be able to collect all of the debris at the site. The most important factor to consider is the health and safety of volunteers. If it is not safe to transport over a certain volume or weight of debris from the cleanup location, it is best to leave it there and plan to do another cleanup at a later date.



### Step 5

## Cleanup Specifics

Determine what kinds of equipment and supplies you will need, such as:

- **Work gloves**
  - Be sure to either provide gloves or ask volunteers to bring a pair of gloves. If you are providing them for volunteers, we often purchase the [reusable "dipped" work gloves](#) as they work well for grabbing even the little trash. The best part: You can wash and reuse them at your next cleanup. If it is a winter cleanup, be sure to purchase insulated work gloves!
- **Trash bags**
  - For small debris and microplastics, we recommend having volunteers bring a reusable container, like a 5 gallon bucket or a burlap sack. If plastic trash bags are needed, we recommend bringing 2-3 per volunteer.
  - For large debris such as fishing gear, we recommend either using contractor garbage bags, placing the debris directly in a [large super sack](#) or simply carrying the debris item back to the meeting or disposal location without a bag.
- **Cutting tools**
  - Serrated knives are great for cutting rope and line. Make sure you provide a case for the knives for safe and easy stowing when you aren't using them. Remind volunteers to never utilize a knife or similar tool if they are not familiar with it. Identify who in your group feel comfortable and able to help cut items during the cleanup.
- **First-aid kit**
- **Marine VHF radio** if planning a vessel-based cleanup
- **GPS Navigation system** if planning a remote cleanup
- Depending on your location, **bear deterrent** may be needed
- Depending on weather, **sunscreen and bug spray** may be needed

- **Outdoor gear**
  - Encourage volunteers to wear the appropriate gear such as boots, comfortable clothing and layers no matter the time of year. Depending on your location, volunteers may need raingear as well.
- **Sign-in sheet**
  - Record the number of participants and enable you to contact them later with thanks and photos. The agency or organization that manages the location may have a waiver that your volunteers need to sign too.
- **Pens or pencils** for collecting data
- **Information on how to download Clean Swell** or how to use the Arctic Ocean Trash Data Card
- **Hand sanitizer or wipes** are nice to have available for your volunteers after the cleanup
- **Water**
  - Volunteers must have water at cleanups. To avoid single-use, provide a container of water at the event and encourage volunteers to bring reusable water bottles. Make sure to pack reusable or compostable cups as well for those without.
- **Food**
  - Providing a meal at your cleanup can be tricky when you're trying to reduce waste! Use these tips to cut down on packaging, single-use plastics, and food waste.
    - *Provide healthy snacks, such as fruit, that don't require packaging.*
    - *Serve easy to eat finger food—sandwiches, veggies/chips & dip, jerky— that can be eaten without cutlery.*
    - *Ask volunteers to bring lunch with them or make it a potluck.*
    - *If you host events regularly, it may be best to purchase inexpensive, reusable plates and silverware that you wash in between events.*
    - *Donate any leftover food to a local group or organization (locate one beforehand and communicate about what they can accept) or suggest that volunteers bring food home with them to eat later.*
- **Scale**
  - If you have a fish or luggage scale (a scale with a hook), you can use it to weigh full trash bags. If you are expecting a large amount of trash or very heavy bags, an electronic shipping scale could also work but make sure it has batteries and a flat surface to sit on.

## Keep These Safety Tips in Mind

Review what to do in case of a health emergency (heat exhaustion or heatstroke, hypothermia, rolled ankle, broken bone, etc.) and find out whether any of your volunteers have medical training or know basic first aid. Plan ahead for handling sharp items, such as syringes or pieces of broken glass. We recommend disposing of these items in a wide mouth container with a tight screw lid, such as an empty liquid laundry detergent bottle that you have clearly labeled. Only adult volunteers should handle sharp items.

Find out which authorities to contact in case you encounter any dead, entangled or injured wildlife (in the United States you can contact the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)) or your local Fish and Wildlife Office ([www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov))). You can report these finds on your Arctic Ocean Trash Data Card or on the comments section in the Clean Swell app, but be sure to leave any wildlife handling to the experts.



## Step 6

# Disposal Plan

Make sure that you have a plan for how you will dispose of the debris. Depending on your location and the type of disposal facilities available nearby, planning for disposal may require significant coordination with other companies, organizations and/or your local municipality. Here are some things to think about when it comes to disposal:

- Do you have a local disposal option? If yes, be sure to coordinate ahead of time to make sure you are able to take your collected debris there.
- If you do not have a good local disposal option, are you able to ship or backhaul to a regional hub where there are more disposal and recycling capabilities? If you'd like to learn more about this option, please let us know and we can help explore it.

Are you planning to sort debris? We highly recommend you sort your debris if you are able to! By sorting the debris, you increase the chances of being able to recycle some or all of your waste. Make sure staff and volunteers know how to sort and be sure to label bins or bags with explanations of what items can go where. Tape signs to bins or bags for "Recycling" and "Landfill", or whichever categories you choose to sort by. This is a great educational moment for volunteers!



### Recycle

Be aware of what items you can recycle in your community and be sure to sort any items collected or used during the event to be recycled.



### Landfill and/or Other Waste

All other items that cannot be recycled or composted. These items may be sent to landfill or other waste disposal facilities depending on what is available in your region.



### Potentially Hazardous Materials

Check with your local municipality to see what can be done with batteries, electronics, tires and even paint.







Photo Credit: Patricia Chambers

# During the Cleanup

## What to Tell Your Volunteers

Instruct volunteers on what to do if they encounter any hazardous items, such as sharp objects or dead, entangled, or injured animals. Remind them of any local safety hazards, such as poisonous plants, bears or other potentially dangerous wildlife. If bears inhabit your area, make sure your volunteers stay together in groups and that at least one person in each group has the appropriate bear deterrent.

Tell volunteers what to do with the filled bags of trash and set a meeting time for the end of the cleanup so that everyone returns at the same time. Children should always have adult supervision. Emphasize the importance of data collection. Make sure each cleanup team has a designated data recorder with the Clean Swell app downloaded on their device or the Arctic Ocean Trash Data Card on hand, so they can keep track of the items being collected by the group. Make sure your volunteers know this valuable information is used to create a snapshot of the global ocean trash problem and helps to inform upstream solutions!

Make data collection easier by suggesting that volunteers work in small teams that can have one designated data recorder who can tally items on the app or paper data card as team members collect and call out items found.

Provide your volunteers with a group name to be entered in the Clean Swell app – this makes it easy to look up your group totals later. This could be your event title, your organization or group name, or even different team names within your event, to track a friendly data-collection-competition!

## Document the Cleanup

Take before/after photos of the cleanup site as well as shots of your volunteers in action and a final group picture with all of the trash collected. Clean Swell has a photo capture tool that allows volunteers to take photos during their cleanup, which are automatically submitted to Ocean Conservancy and saved on the user's phone camera reel.

As the volunteers finish, remind them to review the information they entered into Clean Swell, such as number of participants, and then make sure they click "Finish my Cleanup" on the app. Collect all completed paper Arctic Ocean Trash Data Cards and sum them onto one grand total card.

## Get a Total Weight

There are a few options for measuring or calculating an estimate of the total weight of trash removed at your cleanup event. The easiest and most accurate option is utilizing a waste management service to obtain a total weight of a roll-off bin or dumpster and subtracting the empty bin/dumpster weight to get the trash weight or getting a weight from your local transfer station

If that is not an option, the next best route is to use a scale to weigh each bag or super sack of trash. We recommend consolidating as many partially-full bags into fewer, fuller trash bags as possible. You can reuse those empty bags at your next event!





# After the Cleanup

## Share Your Results

After volunteers submit their data on Clean Swell, encourage them to share their accomplishments via the social media share options right in the app. If your volunteers used paper Arctic Ocean Trash Data Cards, please scan and send the summary card to the International Coastal Cleanup team at [cleanup@oceanconservancy.org](mailto:cleanup@oceanconservancy.org).

It is a good idea to survey your cleanup team post-event. Encourage everyone to share experiences, stories and pictures about what they saw. This might encourage others to attend future events—and now is the time to start planning. Let them know about your next cleanup; get volunteers onboard while their enthusiasm is high!

## Provide Data to Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservancy can help combine all data associated with your cleanup so you can see the total impact and how your team contributed to a cleaner ocean! Reach out to our email here if your group used the Clean Swell app and you would like to obtain those data and summary reports from Ocean Conservancy's online, open-access database. If you have any questions, or would like to share photos or highlights, feel free to reach out to Ocean Conservancy: [cleanup@oceanconservancy.org](mailto:cleanup@oceanconservancy.org).

## Say Thanks!

Send out an email or social media post saying, "Look what we did!" Include how many friends, family and community members joined in, and the total weight of trash that was collected. Celebrate your accomplishment as a cleanup organizer and ocean advocate.

# Thank you!



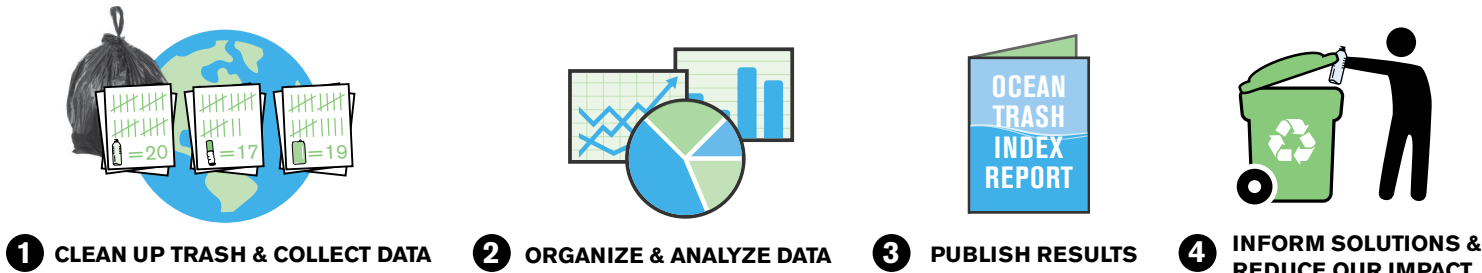
Photo Credit: Patricia Chambers

# ARCTIC OCEAN TRASH DATA FORM



Thank you for tracking your cleanup with this data card customized for the Arctic Region. While cleaning up, please be mindful of the unique circumstances of your location, from sensitive habitat to cultural and/or historic items that should not be removed. This card allows you to record collected debris in a number of ways: by item count, by weight or by volume (filled bags). You do not need to report all of these measurements – choose which method works best for your group and circumstances. Thank you for making an impact and contributing to the world's largest ocean plastics database.

## HERE IS HOW IT WORKS:



NAME:  EMAIL:

DATE OF CLEANUP:  NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON THIS CARD: adults:  children (under 12):

### CLEANUP SITE DESCRIPTION

**Type of Environment (choose one):**

- Saltwater (ocean/bay/estuary)
- Freshwater (river/stream/lake)
- Inland (no water body present)

**Mode of Data Collection (choose one):**

- Land (beach/shoreline/inland)
- Underwater
- Watercraft (powerboat/sailboat/kayak/canoe)

### SITE INFORMATION

Cleanup Site Name:

State or Province:

Country:

Zone or County:

Nearest Crossroad or Landmark:

### POST-CLEANUP COMMENTS

General comments:	Fouled debris or debris with clear animal bite marks:
Notable brands or source identification:	Items not removed (hazardous material, items of cultural or historical significance):

DEAD/INJURED ANIMAL	STATUS	ENTANGLED	TYPE OF ENTANGLEMENT ITEM
	Dead or Injured	Yes or No	

Please return this form to your area coordinator.  
If you are unable to do so, please email it to:  
cleanup@oceanconservancy.org

Trash Free Seas: [www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanup](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanup)  
Be a Green Boater: [www.oceanconservancy.org/goodmate](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/goodmate)  
Go Paperless! Download Clean Swell: [www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanswell](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanswell)



# TRASH COLLECTED

**Citizen scientist:** Pick up all trash and record all items you find below. No matter how small the items, the data you collect are important for Trash Free Seas.®

### THREE WAYS TO PROVIDE DATA:

1. Count individual items using tally marks
2. For a category, provide total number of bags filled and size of bag or
3. For a category, provide the total weight removed

### EXAMPLE:

	WEIGHT	BAGS COLLECTED	ITEM COUNT
Buoys/floats (foam) <i>120 liter bags</i>		4	

### FISHING & AQUACULTURE:

	WEIGHT	BAGS COLLECTED	ITEM COUNT
Aquaculture gear (trays, barrels, rope cuttings):			
Bait packaging/boxes/holders:			
Buoys/floats (foam):			
Buoys/floats (hard plastic):			
Foam blocks/dock pieces:			
Fish boxes (foam):			
Fishing hooks, lures, etc.:			
Fishing/seafood traps:			
Fishing line: <i>approx. length or tally space</i>			
Fishing nets (whole):			
Fishing nets (cut-offs):			
Line & Rope > 50 cm ( <i>note type i.e. dolly rope, nylon, leaded, etc.</i> ):			
Line & Rope < 50 cm ( <i>note type i.e. dolly rope, nylon, leaded, etc.</i> ):			
Packaging tube rolls:			
Plastic sheeting/tarps:			

### PERSONAL HYGIENE & OTHER DEBRIS:

6-pack holders:	=
Clothing:	=
Condoms:	=
Diapers:	=
E-cigarettes:	=
Electronic waste (phones, batteries):	=
Footwear:	=
Gloves (rubber/latex) & masks (PPE):	=
Paper bags:	=
Gun shells/cartridges:	=
Tobacco Products (lighters, cigar tips, wrap):	=
Toys:	=
Other plastic waste:	=

TOTAL #  
↓

### TINY TRASH LESS THAN 2.5CM

*2.5cm (actual size)*

Plastic/foam pieces:	=

TOTAL #  
↓

	WEIGHT	BAGS COLLECTED	ITEM COUNT
Appliances:			
Barrels & buckets (plastic):			
Barrels (metal):			
Conveyor belt pieces:			
Plastic bottles/cans (cleaners, oil):			
Metal bottles/cans (gas, oil):			
Construction materials:			
Foam Packaging/Insulation:			
Gloves (work, cloth):			
Packing/Strapping bands:			
Pallets:			
Tires:			
Other waste (metal, treated wood, etc.):			
Weather balloons:			

### CONSUMER GOODS & FOODWARE:

TOTAL #  
↓

Balloons:	=
Beverage bottles (glass):	=
Beverage bottles (plastic):	=
Beverage cans:	=
Beverage sachets:	=
Bottle caps (metal):	=
Bottle caps (plastic):	=
Cigarette butts:	=
Cotton bud sticks (cotton swabs):	=
Cups, plates (foam):	=
Cups, plates (paper):	=
Cups, plates (plastic):	=
Food containers (foam):	=
Food containers (plastic):	=
Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.):	=
Grocery bags (plastic):	=
Other bags (plastic):	=
Lids (plastic):	=
Straws/stirrers:	=
Utensils:	=

### OTHER ITEMS NOT LISTED

TOTAL #  
↓

1.	=
2.	=
3.	=

### CLEANUP SUMMARY (circle units)

Number of Trash Bags Filled:	<input type="text"/>	Weight of Trash Collected:	<input type="text"/> lbs/kgs	Distance Cleaned:	<input type="text"/> miles/km	Area Cleaned:	<input type="text"/> miles <sup>2</sup> /km <sup>2</sup>
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