

Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

The PA Lake Erie International Coastal cleanups are held rain or shine. Visit www.nie.goerie.com or join us on Facebook Erie Coastal Cleanup.

These sites need your cleanup help

Whether you live along the coast or miles inland, you are ultimately connected to the waterways that provide you with water, food and recreation.

Join us on Saturday at one of the sites listed below to keep our local waterways and the entire ocean environment clean.

You can help us identify the sources of debris, so we can change the behaviors that cause the problems.

For a map of cleanup sites, meeting locations and contact information and to register, visit <http://nie.goerie.com/coastal-cleanup/>.

DEP's Coastal Resources Management program has been the main sponsor of the PA-Lake Erie International Coastal Clean-up since 2003.

If you have any questions about the event, please call Jake Moore at

217-9634 or e-mail him at jacmoore@pa.gov

Cleanup sites

- Raccoon Creek Park
- Avonia Beach Park
- Erie Bluffs State Park/Elk Creek
- Walnut Creek Access
- Upper Walnut Creek
- Presque Isle State Park
- Cascade Creek/Frontier Park
- Upper Millcreek
- Downtown Erie
- McDannell Run
- Four Mile Creek—Upper/Lower
- Seven Mile Creek
- Shades Beach Park / Harborcreek
- North East Marina, Freeport Beach, Twenty Mile Creek Park
- Edinboro/McKean
- Bridger Park—Millcreek Twp.
- East Avenue Boat Launch/Beach

— Anna McCartney



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Harding Elementary School students clean up their playground. Register your school to conduct a cleanup. Contact Anna McCartney at axm40@psu.edu.

Pfeiffer-Burleigh kids want to stop pollution

Pfeiffer-Burleigh teacher Jane Ross shared her fifth-grade students' thoughts on plastic pollution.

Plastic is bad for the animals. It is terrible that people litter water bottles, bags and bottle caps. These plastics end up in the oceans, lakes and rivers. — Lucy Ventura

Plastic is polluting Lake Erie. Plastics, such as cigarette butts, bottle caps, toothbrushes and water bottles are being littered on land and water. I hope that people will stop littering, or at least find a way to keep it from going into our waterways. — Dylan Colvin

People should use less plastic and stop polluting, so that everyone can drink refreshing water, enjoy swimming, and eat their favorite fish. — Zaynab Jebur

I want to help clean up plastic and keep it out of the environment. People should stop polluting the water with plastic. When people pollute oceans and lakes, animals die! — Marques Santos

It is important to reuse and recycle plastic for the environment. We need water to live. Plastic will kill the fish if we do nothing about it. We need to keep Lake Erie clean and save the fishes! — Armin Barucija

We should all tune in to make this a great planet! Here are a few of my ideas: 1. When you have a picnic at the beach, don't leave things, such as bottles, food wrappers, and straws. 2. People should stop smoking because all cigarettes are made with plastic inside. 3. If you go fishing, don't leave the fishing line. — Taylor Mickel



FRAN SKELLIE/Contributed photo

These volunteers at the mouth of Four Mile Creek joined 648,000 other volunteers in 92 countries in the 2013 International Coastal Cleanup and kept more than 12.3 million pounds of trash out of lakes, streams and the ocean. Producing little to no garbage is the most obvious choice for solving the pollution caused by this plastic and other waste, but that will require radical changes in all levels of society.

Making waves

Cleanup volunteers take steps to stop pollution

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Most trash collected each year by International Coastal Cleanup volunteers is made of plastic.

In a short time, disposable plastics have become the new normal and created a new form of pollution. Billions of disposable and single-use plastic bags, straws, bottles, utensils, lids, cups, diapers and many other products are crammed into landfills and are polluting streams, lakes, beaches and the ocean.

While the ICC creates awareness of the extent of marine debris, preventing and solving this pollution must address the underlying unsustainable production and consumption patterns that are responsible for this problem. The fact is that plastic does not decompose.

Unfortunately, taking voluntary actions, because it's the right thing to do, doesn't work when there are more than seven billion people. Bans and fees on disposable plastics won't solve the problem, either, unless they are done uniformly in every city, state and country around the world. Illinois became the first state to ban plastic microbeads in personal care products and California recently banned plastic bags. However, plastic pollution will still impact these states since it travels from other states and countries to their shores, and the ocean and water resources we all share.

Requiring businesses to take responsibility for their products' end-of-life impacts is the best solution. It redistributes the burden from governments and individuals to producers. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and clear performance standards would encourage innovation that provides consumers with more du-

“Man's curiosity, his relentlessness, his inventiveness, his ingenuity have led him into deep trouble. We can only hope that these same traits will enable him to claw his way out.”

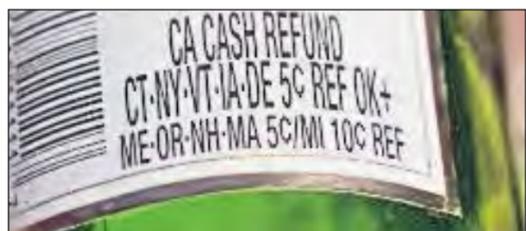
— E.B. White

erable products and less waste. Reusable steel and glass bottles, cloth grocery bags and green chemistry can move us to a more sustainable society whose goal should be zero waste. And with proper recovery, events like the ICC become unnecessary.

But you don't have to wait to start tackling this serious issue. Start by volunteering this Saturday at an ICC site near you and do the following:

1. Refuse all disposable plastics.
2. Reduce plastic and other waste. Replace them with reusable products. Buy products with little or no packaging, and products made from recycled materials like glass and aluminum, which can be reused and recycled indefinitely.
3. Recycle.
4. Don't litter—dispose of your waste properly. (This includes cigarette butts).
5. Urge your local, state and national leaders to take steps to reduce plastic pollution.

ANNA McCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



BOTTLEBILL.ORG

Return deposits increase recycling, reduce litter, save cities millions in cleanup and disposal and add thousands of jobs. In New York State about \$100 million in unclaimed deposits are added to the environmental protection fund and the general fund.



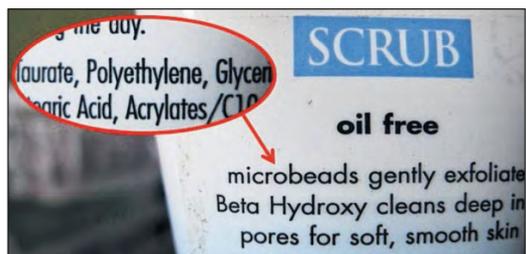
ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Matt Pluta, left, and Brian Gula hope to keep the most littered item in the world off Presque Isle beaches with receptacles provided by Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. The cigarette butts, which are made of plastic, are sent to be recycled into other products.



STEELYDRINKWARE.COM

Refuse disposable plastics. Replace single-use plastic bags, straws, bottles, utensils, lids and cups with a one-time purchase of reusable products that leave zero waste.



5 GYRES INSTITUTE

Avoid products that list polyethylene and polypropylene in their ingredients. These plastic microbeads are polluting rivers, lakes and the ocean and getting into the food chain.

This page brought to you by:



Check out these websites to learn more:

- <http://5gyres.org/>
- <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>
- <http://oceanconservancy.org>
- www.paseagrant.org/

Plastic water and soda bottles, straws, food wrappers, cups, plates, forks, spoons and knives. You may think picnic, but it's no picnic when they become marine debris. These items were on the "Top 10 ICC Items Found" during the 2013 event, with cigarette butts leading the pack. Expect no shortage of them this year. Write a letter to the editor to encourage readers to use reusable bags, bottles and utensils instead.

