



PLASTICS INDUSTRY
CLEAN UP



GUIDE TO PLANNING A LITTER CLEAN UP

Developed by Future Leaders in Plastics

October 2022



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Overview



Overview & Background

The [Future Leaders in Plastics \(FLiP\)](#) Community Impact Task Group was created in April of 2022 to foster collaboration among PLASTICS member companies and external organizations to provide an outlet for the industry to give back and positively impact the environment and communities the plastics industry serves.

The first clean up was held in conjunction with PLASTICS' 2022 Fall Board Meeting and National Conference in Asheville, North Carolina on September 21st, 2022, the week after [National Clean Up Day](#) and [International Coastal Clean Up Day](#). The purpose of this impact initiative was to remove mismanaged waste from the environment.

This toolkit was created by FLiP members interested in positively impacting their communities by cleaning up mismanaged waste; it provides a set of guidelines to help plan and execute a clean up event.

Within the toolkit, you will find:

- A step-by-step checklist of how to plan a clean up event and what is needed on site
- Best practices for finding a local partner organization
- Marketing materials
- Sample waiver and sign-up sheet
- How to track and dispose of the items you have collected
- Options for enhancing your clean up event

On behalf of the FLiP Community Impact Task Group, thank you for your efforts to clean up our environment. Let's get started!

Questions?

Please reach out to **Heather Nortz**, Manager of Sustainability & Materials at PLASTICS and Staff Liaison for this Task Group.

For more information about FLiP, please email flip@plasticsindustry.org.

Checklist



Checklist for Planning a Clean up

Timeline

Depending on your amount of dedicated planning time per week, how many people you plan to host, and whether or not you would like to partner with a local organization, FLiP recommends that you begin planning anywhere from 2 – 3 months out from your desired date.

Choosing a Time, Date, and Location

For clean up planning purposes, consider your volunteers' commitment time, their physical capabilities and comfort levels, as well as the weather, time of sunrise and sunset, transportation logistics, and proximity to restroom facilities. Some areas of high risk of litter are parks, nature trails, roadsides, and waterways such as streams, rivers, lakes, and beaches.

It is also recommended that you be aware of people experiencing homelessness who may be residing in the area you are planning to clean up. Be respectful of the personal space of anyone in the area. Avoid overcrowding and picking up anyone's personal belongings.

If you aren't already aware of an area in need of cleaning up, it can be useful to reach out to a local organization such as your local [Keep America Beautiful Affiliate](#) or Parks and Recreation Department.

It is recommended that you visit the site once before your clean up event to ensure that it is a safe area, that there is, in fact, litter for your group to pick up, and to note any other possible logistical challenges.

Finding a Partner Organization

Coordinating with a local organization that regularly puts on clean up events can be very beneficial. To find a partner organization:

- Search for your local [Keep America Beautiful Affiliate](#).
- Contact your local Parks and Recreation Department.
 - ◇ You can often find their website or contact information by searching “parks and recreation department in [insert your city name]”.
- Googling “litter clean up near me” can often lead you to other local organizations that host clean up events.
- There is also the option to join a clean up that is being hosted by others by searching on [National Clean Up Day's website](#) or [International Coastal Clean Up's website](#).

If you choose to partner with an external organization, some things they may be able to help you with are:

- Scouting a location in need of cleaning up.
- Providing you with equipment for your volunteers to use during the clean up.
 - ◇ i.e., trash bags, waste pickers, gloves, vests
- Weighing and recording your collected items.
- Connecting you with a waste management company to take away your collected trash and recyclables.
- Providing advice on what types of potentially harmful plants or animals to watch out for in your particular area.

Materials & Equipment

- Bring a sign-up sheet and multiple printed copies of waivers for your volunteers to sign. A digital form will also work and can be provided to participants prior to your clean up for efficiency. This is an important step for liability and volunteer security. Samples of these documents are provided in the [Appendix](#).
 - ◇ Even if waivers and sign-up sheets are provided prior to the event, be sure to bring extra copies on site or have digital copies in case anyone is signing up at the last minute.



- You will need trash and recycling bags to hold collected items, as well as protective gloves for handling those items. Trash “grabbers” and a hanging scale to weigh bags afterwards are optional, but good to have.
 - ◇ If you don’t have a scale, you can use a standard conversion of 15 pounds per trash bag to estimate the overall weight of your collected trash.
 - ◇ You can also use the [Clean Swell](#) App feature that adds up estimated weight as you track collected items.
- Note: We have found that it is difficult to capture each individual item as you are cleaning up, so this is again, an estimation.
- Bring a safety and emergency kit. Recommended items include:
 - ◇ First aid kit
 - ◇ Bug repellent and bug-bite relief cream
 - ◇ Sunscreen
 - ◇ Advil / Tylenol
 - ◇ Hand sanitizer / sanitation wipes

- ◇ Water
- ◇ Snacks
- Dress Code
 - ◇ It is recommended that volunteers wear long pants and long sleeves. That being said, please do encourage volunteers to dress for the weather. You do not want volunteers to overheat or be too cold or wet when working.
 - ◇ Thick gardening gloves are recommended to protect volunteers from sharp objects and to keep their hands clean of dirt, mud, and plants such as pricker bushes or poison ivy.
 - ◇ Closed-toes shoes are essential.
 - ◇ If you are working in a waterway, water shoes and waders are recommended to keep dry. If you are on a roadside, wear a safety vest or bright colors.

Welcoming Remarks / Housekeeping

Once you arrive at the clean up site, it is a good idea for the leader of the event to give welcoming remarks to the volunteer group. Thank everyone who helped plan and volunteered for the clean up and share why the project was started, emphasizing the importance of giving back to the community.

Housekeeping items such as the “Dos and Don’ts” listed below, any other safety reminders, as well as information on how to track collected items and where to bring trash bags once they are full should also be covered. If you are working with a partner organization, have them tell the group about the work they do and cover any additional safety matters they deem important.

Tracking, Recording, and Disposing of Collected Items

Tracking and recording the types and volume of collected mismanaged materials helps to understand what products are most commonly in the environment and how they got there. This information can turn into actionable insights to be used in advocating for increased waste management infrastructure and education. Tracking as you go can also help with separating recyclables and non-recyclables into different bags.

- Using Apps like [Litterati](#) or [Clean Swell](#) can be helpful in tracking the items you collect as you go. Peruse them both to see if either will meet your needs. There is also a sample tally sheet in the Appendix of this document that you can print if you prefer to use a non-digital tracker.



- ◇ An alternate option is to collect all items in the same bag and separate / tally at the end. If using this approach, be careful of sharp objects when emptying bags.

After items are taken out of the environment, they must be sent to the proper end-of-life / disposal facility. Before hosting your clean-up, ensure that you have a plan for either taking your collected items to their proper end-of-life site or for the proper entity to pick your items up.

- To find the proper disposal facilities, ask your partner organization or contact your local waste management and recycling facilities.
 - ◇ Most [recyclers can be found here](#). Your local curbside waste pick-up company may also be able to pick up your bags at your clean up location.
- Check with your local municipality to see what can be done with items such as batteries, electronics, tires, paint, etc.

Enhancing Your Clean Up Event

- Open the event with welcoming remarks about the purpose of the event, thank your volunteers for their participation, ensure everyone has a “buddy” and knows where to find safety/emergency items, clean up equipment, and the closest hygiene facilities.
- Take pictures!
 - ◇ Post on social media & tag PLASTICS on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
 - ◇ Use a hashtag, such as: #Clean up, #FLiPClean up, #CommunityImpact, #FLiPCCommunityImpact, #PeopleOfPlastics #Plastics_US, etc.
- Create T-Shirts for the event or plan for everyone to wear your company color; bright colors are a good idea that can also enhance group safety.
- “Gamify” the event by making it a competition among different groups.
 - ◇ See which group can collect the largest volume, the most specified material or product, the strangest item, etc.
- Reward your volunteers: hire a food truck, take everyone to a restaurant or brewery afterwards, or give everyone a small individual gift. Your volunteers put a lot of effort into helping you make a difference in the community. Celebrate a job well done!
- Ask your mayor or another local leader for a National Clean Up Day [Proclamation](#). It’s simple to do and can be administered without excessive procedure or a vote.

Dos and Don’ts

Provided by [Asheville GreenWorks](#), [National Clean Up Day](#), and [Ocean Conservancy](#)

Remember to:

- Visit the clean up site in advance to identify safety and logistics considerations.
- Determine where to set up a check-in station and what areas volunteers will clean.
- Take BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER photos to highlight your work.
- Use the “buddy system” and work in teams of two or three to maximize safety.
- Have one person per group be your “designated data recorder.”

- ◇ This person should be aware of potential safety risks including touching trash and then touching a phone, notebook, clipboard, etc.
- Drink plenty of fluids and keep “quick energy foods” on hand.
- Take occasional breaks.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the potential hazards associated with them (e.g., passing cars, tree branches, poison ivy, etc.).
- Wash hands after the clean up. Any gear used during a clean up such as litter grabbers, reusable gloves or buckets should also be sanitized immediately after the event.
- Keep track of where you leave bags for a speedy pickup.
- Contact your local [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) office if you encounter any dead, entangled, or injured wildlife. Be sure to leave any wildlife handling to the experts.

Don't:

- Don't pick up hazardous materials such as hypodermic needles, sharp objects, old car batteries, condoms, animal carcasses, or other unidentified, questionable objects.
- Don't overstuff bags or carry torn bags, as they are likely to burst.
- Don't attempt to move large objects such as rusted car shells, old household appliances or swing sets.
 - ◇ Call your local fire or police department to report illegal dumping and for instructions on how to proceed with items that are too large to dispose of in your trash and recycling bags.
- Don't bring pets to the event, as they may distract participants or even detract from the clean up!
- Don't overdo it physically; listen to your body and take care of yourself. You want your volunteers to be able to enjoy the good work they are doing!
- Don't leave bags far from the road or in hard-to-reach areas.
- Don't go too close to the road: stay several feet away from the edge of the road unless you have checked to make sure no cars are nearby.
- Don't take part in the clean up if you are feeling sick.

Marketing Toolkit



Marketing Toolkit

Recruiting Volunteers

- Tell your co-workers and community members about your clean up event!
 - ◇ Announce in all-staff meetings, post on company or community bulletin boards, and send a company-wide email.
 - ◇ Include information such as time, date, location, transportation, what to expect, dress code, and what to bring.
- Hold an orientation before getting on-site to ensure all volunteers know what to expect and what to wear/bring. This can be done virtually.

Getting the Word Out

- Promote your event via social media and your company website.
- Take photos before, during, and after your event to share progress on social media and your website.
- Include a hashtag for all to use on social media. Examples include:
 - ◇ #Clean up
 - ◇ #FLiPClean up
 - ◇ #CommunityImpact
 - ◇ #FLiPCommunityImpact
 - ◇ #NationalClean upDay
 - ◇ #PeopleOfPlastics
- Set a goal for the weight or number of bags collected.
- You may need to have one clean up under your belt to determine a baseline, but setting reach goals can also be a good way to motivate volunteers!
- Report your clean up on [Litterati](#) app, [Clean Swell](#) app, [National Clean Up Day](#) website, or [International Coastal Clean Up Day](#) website.
- Publish a press release to post on your website and local media. A press release template is included in the [Appendix](#).

Share your story with us so we can promote it on our platforms. Tag us!



LinkedIn | [Plastics Industry Association](#)



Twitter | [@PLASTICS_US](#)



Facebook | [@plasticsindustryassociation](#)



Instagram | [@plasticsindustryassoc](#)



Press Email | magazine@plasticsindustry.org

Share your story and posts with this email address for possible features in *PLASTICS Magazine*, the insidePLASTICS newsletter or the PLASTICS blog!



Appendix



Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT: [contact name and email address]

Headline

[City, State]—With the guidance of the [Plastics Industry Association's Future Leaders in Plastics \(FLiP\)](#) Community Impact Task Group, [Company Name] hosted a clean up in [location] on [date].

A group of [number of participants] volunteers gathered at [location of clean up] motivated to make a difference and remove mismanaged waste from the environment. The event began with opening remarks from [event organizer / whomever opened the event] who covered the importance of giving back to the community in the form of waste clean ups.

The event was held in collaboration with [insert organization and link here] who are dedicated to [insert mission statement or sentence here].

The volunteers were able to collect [stats about the amount of litter collected].

[Include quote from event organizer or participants about their experience with the clean up / the purpose of the clean up, etc.]

The plastics industry is committed to environmental solutions that support a circular economy: we love plastic but hate plastic waste. [Organization name] expressed sincere gratitude for the volunteers who dedicated their time to picking up not only mismanaged plastic, but metal, paper, and glass litter as well. Clean up participants expressed pride as a result of the impact made during the event and look forward to future clean up efforts.

[Attach images from the event]



Sample Sign-Up Form

All volunteers that participate with an organized group on an episodic volunteer project on a unit of a public land agency must be signed up on this form. By signing this form, you agree to the terms of the project as defined in the attached Waiver and affirmed by the Host Organization. Volunteers under age 18 must complete a waiver that is signed by their parent or guardian. Please indicate your willingness (yes) or unwillingness (no) for the Host Organization to use your photograph, video, or audio in performance of volunteer duties.

Volunteer Number	Volunteer Name (First and Last)	Phone Number	Email Address	Photo Release (Yes or No)
1				
2				
3				
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Waiver Template

Disclaimer: This waiver is provided in good faith by the Plastics Industry Association. We recommend that you always check with your legal counsel before administering this waiver to ensure its relevance and coverage for your specific event.

I am working as a volunteer with [Enter Company Name], hereby referred to as “Company”. I am doing so for the consideration of helping to clean up the environment and the pride it provides. When I am participating in this volunteer program, I agree to cooperate promptly and fully with all directions of leaders of this volunteer effort. I agree to follow all rules and regulations set by Company and all applicable City, State, and Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

I understand the nature of the activities that I will be involved in, including participating in the various types of activities hosted by Company, including, but not limited to walking in uneven terrain, litter pick up, and debris removal.

I represent that I am physically healthy and that I do not have a medical condition that would restrict me from participating in these types of physical activities. I acknowledge that there are risks associated with physical activities of this nature. I hereby assume all dangers and risks associated therewith.

I understand that I am responsible for my own behavior and agree that I will only perform tasks that I feel comfortable and safe doing, and that I am medically and physically capable of doing. I understand that I either need no accommodations to participate or that I have a duty to inform Company of the need for accommodations. I understand it is my responsibility to safely travel to and from the volunteer site and shall not hold Company responsible for any injury I might sustain as a result of my travel to and from the volunteer site. In the event that I am transported by vehicle to a volunteer site, I agree to wear my seatbelt and follow all recommended safety precautions.

In partial consideration of my acceptance as a participant in this volunteer program, I hereby agree to waive all claims I have or may have against Company and Association in relation to volunteer programs and agree to release and hold harmless Company and Association along with their respective employees, agents, affiliates, or other representatives from all claims for all expenses, personal injury, loss, or damages incurred during or in connection to my participating in this volunteer program including the negligence of any other volunteers. This release of liability covers all risks of the activity and any negligence of Company, Association, or Company affiliates.

By Signing this Agreement, you agree that you have carefully read and fully understand all of the provisions in this Release and are freely, knowingly, and voluntarily entering into this Release. You represent that you are above 18 years of age.

ACKNOWLEDGED AND AGREED

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____



Sample Collected Items Tally Sheet

Provided by International Coastal Cleanup

HERE IS HOW IT WORKS:



1 CLEAN UP TRASH & COLLECT DATA



2 ORGANIZE & ANALYZE DATA



3 PUBLISH RESULTS



4 INFORM SOLUTIONS & REDUCE OUR IMPACT

NAME:

EMAIL:

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 or inland)
- Underwater
- Watercraft (powerboat, sailboat, kayak or canoe)

SITE INFORMATION:

Cleanup Site Name:

State or Province: Zone or County:

Country: Nearest Crossroad or Landmark:

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON THIS CARD:

adults children (under 12)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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MOST UNUSUAL ITEM COLLECTED:

DATE OF CLEANUP:



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.[®]

EXAMPLE:

Plastic Bags:

|||| IIII

TOTAL #
↓
= 8

Please DO NOT use words or check marks. Only **numbers** are useful data.

MOST LIKELY TO FIND ITEMS:

Grocery bags (plastic):	=	
Other bags (plastic):	=	
Beverage bottles (glass):	=	
Beverage bottles (plastic):	=	
Beverage cans:	=	

Cups, plates (foam):	=	
Cups, plates (paper):	=	
Cups, plates (plastic):	=	
Food containers (foam):	=	
Food containers (plastic):	=	

FISHING & BOATING:

Line, nets, traps, rope, etc.:	=	
Foam dock pieces:	=	

ILLEGAL DUMPING:

Appliances:	=	
Construction materials:	=	
Tires:	=	

PACKAGING MATERIAL:

6-pack holders:	=	
Foam packaging:	=	
Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.):	=	
Strapping bands:	=	

OTHER ITEMS/DEBRIS:

Balloons:	=	
Clothing:	=	
E-cigarettes:	=	
Electronic waste (phones, batteries):	=	
Footwear (shoes/slippers):	=	
Paper bags:	=	
Tobacco products (lighters, cigar tips, wrap):	=	
Toys:	=	
Other plastic waste:	=	
Other waste (metal, paper, etc.):	=	

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

Condoms:	=	
Cotton bud sticks (swabs):	=	
Diapers:	=	
Gloves & masks (PPE):	=	
Syringes:	=	
Tampons & applicators:	=	

OTHER ITEMS NOT LISTED:

1.	=	
2.	=	
3.	=	
4.	=	
5.	=	

TINY TRASH LESS THAN 2.5CM

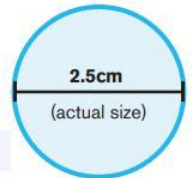
Plastic/foam pieces:	=	
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DEAD/INJURED ANIMAL

Type of animal: _____

Status: dead/injured Entangled: yes/no

Type of entanglement item: _____



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 ² /km ²
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