Stories from the CT Cleanup

"For the past eight years I have been leading cleanups at Rocky Neck State Park and have been assiduously trying to make the area cleaner and safer. My biggest concern is the issue of knowledge around pollution. The abundance of disposable masks during the height of the pandemic introduced a new trash type and hazard to the environment, but everyone knows how important it is to break off the use loops before disposing of them. Something that seems so simple isn’t getting done and those masks end up in our waters; they would both pollute our waters and put animals at risk of suffocation."

- Michelle Messner, East Lyme

"Many people are surprised to learn that cigarette butts are composed mainly of plastic, specifically, cellulose acetate. Because plastics don’t decompose, improperly discarded cigarette butts stick around for a very long time, creating visible pollution and contributing to the leaching of harmful chemicals into our ground and water."

- Annalisa Pallafuso, Hamden

"Having grown up on the Sound, I know how much cleaner it is now. One of my biggest concerns is trash volume of microplastics, and the production of new plastics has seemed to slow. But hosting these cleanups and bringing people together, especially younger people, to address these problems is moving in the right direction to address the problem. I’m just seeing how enthusiastic our younger generation is about making a difference. It reminds me of older folks who we are trying to leave cleaner places for."

- George Smith, East Haven

"It was just my fifth time coming over to help clean up with Save the Sound. I was inspired to lead these cleanups after seeing so much trash on the beach. Finding it unacceptable, and therefore responsible to do something about it. The Connecticut’s action supports the Coast Guard’s efforts as well. Sometimes it’s easy to assume the issue of litter can be very discouraging given the widespread response to the problem, but despite it is not an option. There even bring me hope and offer one to be solution."

- Robert Mci, New Haven

"When patrolling the Sound, the most common plastic types I see are balloons and plastic bottles. Research shows a significant amount of microplastics in Long Island Sound as well. These are readily visible and difficult to track down, making them one of the most visible pollutants. These microplastics are frequently ingested by smaller organisms and have the ability to accumulate in animals higher up the food chain. It is the Connecticut’s mission to protect and restore the natural beauty of the Sound, minimize water if it were the Sound Sound by tracking pollution sources and finding methods to reduce them."

- Emile Deloupg, Bridgeport

"Trash on land becomes trash in the ocean. Trash thrown out the window ends up on the street then washes down a storm drain into a stream. Roadside litter makes it, it releases all kinds of toxic that wash over fish affecting their ability to spawn and wild shorebirds. Plastic is everywhere. We always find plastic bags or bottles in old boggers as well. Aquatic life, a shell fish, fresh from the Western Sound’s estimates, and it is not always the pounds of plastic over the years. We cannot cancel it for pollution assistance and we need the strategies to fix it. the will is there, people from all areas of the desert clean water and clean fish."

- Bill Leney, New Haven

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Connecticut Cleanup Report

20 Years of Cleaning Up Connecticut

Since 2002, Save the Sound has hosted the Connecticut Cleanup as part of the Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup. We support up to 75 cleanups annually involving 1,000 volunteers to collect data on types of debris, volume of trash, and other metrics at beaches, parks, docks, and more. Each year, more than 2,000 volunteers pick up several tons of trash, tracking each piece so we can understand trends in marine debris and contribute to the global effort to stop it from affecting marine life. This summary of six years of that data highlights the most common types of plastic on the ground and in the Sound.

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Connecticut Cleanup Report 2023

Use your voting power to stop trash in its tracks:

Support local restrictions on Styrofoam, plastic straws, balloons, and other types of single-use plastics. Vote for lawmakers and candidates who will take action.

Reduce single-use plastics in your own life:

Use reusable bags and bottle, share or thrift items instead of purchasing new, and ask your favorite restaurants to offer single-use packaging. These actions are small but mighty and your example makes a difference.

Join the Connecticut Cleanup:

Participate in cleanups from August to October, plan your event as a Connecticut Cleanup and help pass the program and get a special corporate cleanup for your organization! See the Sound to learn more and commit to a cleaner Connecticut.

www.SaveTheSound.org

Action for a healthier environment.

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What Does the Research Say?

The Dangers of Plastic

Since the introduction of plastic in the 1950s, only 9% of the 1.8 million tons of plastic produced that is in use today has been recycled, with 79% ending up in oceans and other natural environments. Currently, plastics make up 60-80% of the world’s marine debris with more than 90% of plastic ending up in the ocean in the past 50 years. 2% of plastic exists as microplastics.

A Threat Too Large to Ignore

Macroplastics, those larger than 5mm, hurt marine life through ingestion and entanglement. As of 2020, more than 600 marine species were confirmed to be affected by marine debris. Sound species likely affected by macroplastics include turtles, seabirds, and harbor seals. Plastics are prevalent in seagrass beds located in highly developed areas and can cause these areas to lose their ecological values due to entanglement. Researchers found that birdsgro in the Gulf of Maine had a 83% incidence of plastic ingestion, and great black-backed gulls had a 23.7% incidence. In the Northeast Atlantic, debris items were found in the gut tract of 83% of herring gulls and seabirds studied.

Small Plastics, Big Problem

Microplastics are not only a threat to marine life, but they also affect our health. Microplastics have been found in the air, water, and food we eat. They can enter the food chain and end up in animals we eat and the water we drink. Many researchers believe that microplastics are now so small that they are not filtered out by our bodies and can cause harm. Once ingested, microplastics can accumulate in the liver and lungs, leading to health problems such as cancer.

Plastic Occurrence and Remediation in Long Island Sound

Along with the Connecticut Cleanup hosted by Save the Sound, there are many other efforts to document and remediate plastic pollution in the region, including the Long Island SeaWiFS and the Connecticut River Conservancy’s “Source to Sea” Cleanup. These cleanup efforts are crucial to reducing plastic pollution.

The EPA’s Long Island Sound Study aims to reduce the amount of marine debris collected by 70% by 2035.