



# Cleanup Captain Manual 2026



**Save the Sound**<sup>®</sup>  
Action for our region's environment.

127 Church Street, 2nd Floor  
New Haven, CT 06510  
[apaltauf@savethesound.org](mailto:apaltauf@savethesound.org)



# Save the Sound<sup>®</sup> CONNECTICUT CLEANUP

Dear Cleanup Captain,

Thank you for helping protect and improve Long Island Sound!

This manual is intended to assist you in planning a cleanup event in your community. Please read over the list of Cleanup Captain responsibilities carefully.

Each cleanup will require planning specific for its location in your community. Some sites are easier to gain access to and clean than others. If you have coordinated a cleanup event in your community before and are familiar with the steps, you may not need Save the Sound to help with these details. If this is your first time, Save the Sound wants to help make this event successful, so please let us know what assistance you need and we will gladly guide you.

In addition to the logistical planning, we need your help to recruit and coordinate volunteers, promote the event in your community and effectively use our data cards during the cleanup. The data cards are very important to help us track the amount and different types of debris collected. Save the Sound provides you with gloves, bags, data cards, and pencils for your volunteers, and this manual to help you on your way to becoming a successful Cleanup Captain.

Please review this manual and feel free to contact us at Save the Sound with any questions.

Thank you again for your time and effort!

Best Regards,

*Annalisa Paltauf*

Annalisa Paltauf  
Ecological Restoration Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator

# Table of Contents

Why Organize a Cleanup?	1
Getting Started	2-3
• Select Your Site	2
• Name the Day	2
• Register with Save the Sound	2
• Getting Permission and Arranging for Trash Removal	3 3
• Publicize Your Cleanup and Recruit Volunteers	3
• Invite Your Elected Officials	3
• Keep Track of Your Volunteers	3
• Save the Sound Cleanup Kit	3
Tips for the Day of the Event	4
• Safety Rules	5
What to Bring	6
After the Cleanup	6
Resources & Tools	7-9
• Marine Debris Decomposition Chart	8
• Community Service Forms for Cleanup Participants	9



Save the Sound®  
**CONNECTICUT  
CLEANUP**



# Why Organize a Cleanup?



Long Island Sound is one of the nation's great estuaries, a place where freshwater from inland waterways flows into saltwater from the ocean. The Sound is a vital economic and recreational resource and provides habitat for diverse animal and plant life. With 10% of our country's population living within 50 miles of the Sound, pollution is one of the biggest issues threatening the health of the Sound and the plants and animals that live there.

When people carelessly dispose of trash, even in everyday activities, it can affect the condition of the Sound. Litter on our beaches or floatable debris in our waters is an ongoing problem. Items such as 6-pack rings, monofilament line and balloons are slow to break down and often entangle and choke animals. Plastic items can be mistaken for food by birds, fish and turtles, which can eventually die of starvation when they are unable to digest the items. Litter anywhere in the watershed can eventually enter the Sound and degrade water quality and harm wildlife.



Susan Middleton

It is an ongoing challenge to control litter and marine trash because we cannot pinpoint the source – this is referred to as non-point source pollution. However, we do know all litter and debris comes from human action (or inaction).



Cleanup volunteers remove the trash plaguing our coastal and inland shorelines. Cleanup volunteers also collect data about what is found to gain insight on which activities produce the most litter (like smoking). The data also provides concrete information to use for advocacy and education to stop litter at its source. With the help of volunteers like yourself, we can reach our goal of a cleaner and healthier Sound.

# Getting Started

1. **Select your Site:** Save the Sound supports cleanups on coastal shores and inland rivers and streams all year long. If you are familiar with a beach or waterway in your community that needs some help, you're one step ahead of the game. If not,

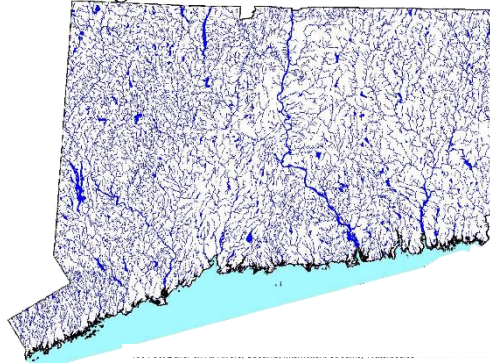
take stock of the potential sites in the surrounding area by looking on town or city hall websites for parks that contain a water body/river. State-owned parks can be found on the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection's website:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Listing-of-State-Parks>

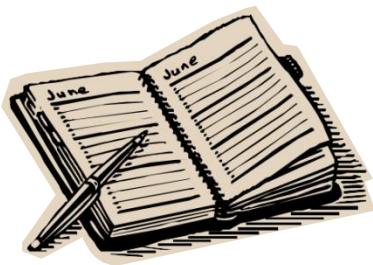
For a complete list of public access points, please visit the Coastal Access Guide:

<https://www.depdata.ct.gov/maps/coastalaccess/index.html>

These sites usually will list a contact number— give it a ring and see if the park manager could use some help cleaning up. If you need help at any point in finding a site, don't hesitate to call Save the Sound for help.



2. **Name the Day:** Select a date and time that you think most volunteers will find convenient.



Most cleanups are scheduled on weekends, usually in the earlier part of the day. If your site is affected by the tides, remember to take that into consideration (a lower tide will give you more access to the shoreline). The average duration of a cleanup is usually 2 to 3 hours—it will be hard to keep volunteers for a longer period of time. You may consider scheduling your cleanup rain or shine, or having a rain date established in case it downpours.

3. **Register with Save the Sound:** Once you have your time and place, be sure to register with Save the Sound. This can be done by filling out and emailing the Cleanup Captain Registration form. Registering as a Cleanup Captain means that you will become the point person for your event. Save the Sound can post your cleanup details on our website with your contact information so that interested volunteers can contact you directly with questions or to RSVP. If you do not want to list your contact info online, Save the Sound can field calls and direct volunteers to your cleanup—just let us know your preference. Please send in your registration several weeks before your event, as it will allow us to help you advertise for volunteers and will ensure you get all of your cleanup supplies on time.



4. **Getting Permission and Arranging for Trash Removal:** Make sure you have permission from the city, town, state, or property owner that manages your site before your cleanup. Also check to determine the parking situation: if there is a fee you should be able to get it waived. For trash removal, contact your local Public Works Dept. in the town to arrange for the removal of bagged garbage after the event. In the past, towns have agreed to haul at no cost, and

waive the dumping fee. Determine where they want you to leave full bags and when they are coming. Ask about recycling – if bottles and cans are bagged up separately, will they be recycled? If your site is a state park, there may be a dumpster onsite or maintenance staff that will pick up your trash at a specified location - in this case, the park manager will be the one that can help you with the details.

5. **Publicize Your Cleanup and Recruit Volunteers:** Now that you have all the details, you're ready to publicize your cleanup. This will help you get volunteers and draw press to your event. Getting your cleanup in the paper or on the news helps boost the impact of your efforts - the more everyone knows about the problem of litter in our waterways, the better chance we have of stopping it at its source. **Due to COVID-19, there may be limitations on how many people can attend a gathering.** Please keep this in mind when recruiting and scheduling volunteers.



6. **Invite Your Elected Officials:** Send the mayor and your local representatives an invitation to your cleanup—it's great to let them know what is happening in their district, and provides a little extra interest for the press. You can find your representatives and their contact information at [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) - just type in your zip code.

7. **Keep Track of Your Volunteers:** As people respond to your call for volunteers, get their email addresses or phone numbers so you may contact them with last minute details. Send out an email to everyone a few days before your cleanup to confirm their attendance and remind them of the time and meeting place; also urge them to dress properly for the weather, wear work clothes, closed toe shoes, and bring plenty of water, a hat, sunscreen, and face mask.



8. **Save the Sound Cleanup Kit:** Be sure to make arrangements with Save the Sound about how to get your Cleanup Kit. In order to cut down on shipping costs, Save the Sound staff will do their best to arrange pick-up, drop-off or meet-up locations that work for you. When you receive it, please review the contents. It should contain gloves, bags, data cards, pencils, sign-in sheets, and an educational chart about marine debris.

**Please note that your kit has been packed to encourage volunteers to work in teams.** There are enough data cards so that up to 4 volunteers can record data on each card.

# Tips for the Day of the Event




- **Come early:** Arrive at your assigned location at least twenty minutes before volunteers are scheduled to arrive. Give yourself plenty of time to set up your volunteer sign-in sheets and cleanup supplies.
- **Volunteer orientation:**
  - **Team up:** Encourage volunteers to form small groups or teams with a designated data recorder, bag holder, trash picker, and so on. Recommend that your volunteers switch tasks throughout the event so everyone gets involved.
  - **Record Quantities and Types of Trash:** It's important to record how much and what types of litter and debris are collected at your event. This data will be tallied by Save the Sound and shared with other agencies and organizations seeking the data. Save the Sound will provide data cards and pencils, please distribute and explain how to properly fill them out to your volunteers.
  - **Plan of Attack:** Outline where volunteers should start cleaning and where they should bring their trash and return their data cards when they are done.
  - **Safety:** Volunteers will be asked to sign-in on a sheet that includes a waiver—all volunteers must sign this sheet to participate in the cleanup activity. It's recommended to have a basic first aid kit on hand at your cleanup with Band-Aids, alcohol wipes and antibacterial ointment. In the event of a major emergency, please use common sense and call 911 if necessary. If friends or family of the injured person are present, let them make any decisions. **We will be following CDC guidelines for outdoor gatherings regarding masks and physical-distancing.**
  - **Read Safety Rules to Volunteers:** (please see next page).



Volunteers gathered behind a trash pile always makes for a great photo opportunity.

## Safety Rules

Please share this information with the volunteers who have signed up for your cleanup event – **tell them before and the day of the event:**

- Stay out of tall grass and shrubs to avoid ticks. 
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, socks, and closed-toe shoes for protection. If you do not, you put yourself at risk for tick infestation, poison ivy reaction, burs and scratches, injured toes and feet, and other injuries.
- The use of sun block and bug/tick spray is recommended. Do not use if you have known allergies to these products.
- Be aware of the risk of ticks. Do a complete body search for ticks following the cleanup event.
- Cleanup areas often have varieties of poison ivy, oak, or sumac. It is advised to take a shower after the event, scrubbing your skin with soap and water. 
- Do not lift heavy objects. If you need help, please ask another volunteer or Cleanup Captain.
- Save the Sound will provide gloves for some protection. Be extremely careful with sharp objects and glass.
- Stay out of slippery, rocky, or steep and dangerous areas.
- Report any injury to your Cleanup Captain and immediately call 911 if there is a serious injury.
- Stay out of dune restoration areas.
- Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. No one should stray from the group. 
- Drink plenty of water in order to stay hydrated.
- Watch out for wildlife. If you see trapped or injured wildlife, please call CT DEEP Wildlife Division at 860-424-3333. **Never approach an injured animal.**
- **Hazardous objects and medical waste should not be handled by volunteers.** Alert your team captain and report hazardous materials to CT DEEP 860-434-6043.
- Please sign waiver of liability sheet.

# What to Bring

Here are a few things that are not included in your kit, but can enhance your cleanup experience if you have them.



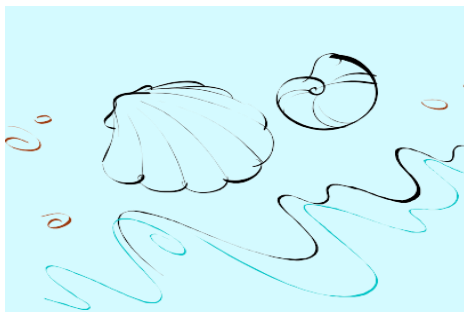
- **A camera.** Catch your volunteers in action and document all of their hard work. Save the Sound can use these photos on our website, social networking sites and brochures. **Email digital versions of your photos to us, or mail printed photos along with your data cards.**
- **A scale** to weigh the debris you pick up—an old bathroom scale would work.
- **A container (like a coffee can) labeled “Sharps”** to place dangerous litter items in, such as broken glass or hypodermic needles.
- **Water and/or snacks.** This isn’t necessary, but it’s nice to provide for your volunteers. If you plan ahead, you may be able to get a donation from a local business that will be happy to provide this for a good cause.

# After the Cleanup

- **Send us your Data!** Summarize what was found at your cleanup using the Cleanup Captain Coordinator form, clip it together with all your data cards and sign-in sheets, and send it all back to Save the Sound in the envelope provided (or scan and email to [apaltauf@savethesound.org](mailto:apaltauf@savethesound.org)). If you have supplies you didn’t use, you can hang on to them to use at your next cleanup!



- **Thank you letters:** Write thank you letters to any sponsors, organizations or groups that helped you during the event.



*As Cleanup Captain, you are important to the success of our cleanup events. You are helping expand our Coastal Cleanup program and protect Long Island Sound and its watershed. You are providing an invaluable service to your community and our environment and we truly appreciate it - THANK YOU!*

# Resources & Tools

If you are interested in learning more about the effects of marine debris on our environment, or are looking for tools to teach other about the issue, there is a wealth of helpful information out there. Below are some websites to visit, and on the next page is a copy of the Marine Debris Decomposition Rates Chart. A laminated version of this chart will be sent to you in your Beach Cleanup Kit for educational purposes, but you may print and distribute more copies if you wish to.



## **Ocean Conservancy - International Coastal Cleanup**

<https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/>

*Visit this site to grasp the scope of this great event which your cleanup may be a part of! Learn about the history of the event, how it has grown, and what it has accomplished. You can also download the most current worldwide report on marine debris, which is based on data collected by you and people like you every September.*

## **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**

### **Marine Debris Program**

[www.marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov)

*This site serves as a clearinghouse of resources for everything related to marine debris. The "Marine Debris 101" section is particularly useful for educators, as there are curriculums, games, activity books, and other materials for students K-12 available for download, all free of charge. You can also read up on national and international initiatives and projects geared toward cleaning up and preventing litter in our oceans.*



## **Algalita Marine Research Foundation**

[www.algalita.org](http://www.algalita.org)

*This organization has a lot of great information about the effects of plastics in the ocean, with plenty of downloadable pamphlets and factsheets to use for educational purposes. They also have videos for sale (for very reasonable rates) on their website that outline some of the major issues facing our oceans.*

# DECOMPOSITION RATES OF MARINE DEBRIS



<b>Glass Bottle</b>	<b>1 million years</b>
<b>Monofilament fishing line</b>	<b>600 years</b>
<b>Plastic beverage bottles</b>	<b>450 years</b>
<b>Disposable diapers</b>	<b>450 years</b>
<b>Aluminum can</b>	<b>80-200 years</b>
<b>Foamed plastic buoy</b>	<b>80 years</b>
<b>Rubber boat sole</b>	<b>50-80 years</b>
<b>Foamed plastic cup</b>	<b>50 years</b>
<b>Tin can</b>	<b>50 years</b>
<b>Leather</b>	<b>50 years</b>
<b>Nylon Fabric</b>	<b>30-40 years</b>
<b>Plastic film canister</b>	<b>20-30 years</b>
<b>Plastic Bag</b>	<b>10-20 years</b>
<b>Cigarette filter</b>	<b>1-50 years</b>
<b>Wool sock</b>	<b>1-5 years</b>
<b>Plywood</b>	<b>1-3 years</b>
<b>Waxed milk carton</b>	<b>3 months</b>
<b>Apple core</b>	<b>2 months</b>
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>6 weeks</b>
<b>Orange or banana peel</b>	<b>2-5 weeks</b>
<b>Paper towel</b>	<b>2-4 weeks</b>

From: "Pocket Guide to Marine Debris," The Ocean Conservancy, 2004.  
Sources: U.S National Park Service; Mote Marine Lab, FL and "Garbage In, Garbage Out"

**Community Service Verification for Beach Cleanup Participant**

Name of volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of work completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Beach Cleanup: \_\_\_\_\_

Beach Captain Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for volunteering with Save the Sound!**  
**[www.savethesound.org](http://www.savethesound.org)**

**Community Service Verification for Beach Cleanup Participant**

Name of volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of work completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Beach Cleanup: \_\_\_\_\_

Beach Captain Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for volunteering with Save the Sound!**  
**[www.savethesound.org](http://www.savethesound.org)**

**Community Service Verification for Beach Cleanup Participant**

Name of volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of work completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Beach Cleanup: \_\_\_\_\_

Beach Captain Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for volunteering with Save the Sound!**  
**[www.savethesound.org](http://www.savethesound.org)**