

*The Project Jonah*

**BEACH  
CLEAN  
-UP-  
CREW**



Clean Green. Pure Blue.

PROJECT JONAH  
NEW ZEALAND

# **The PJ Beach Cleanup Crew.** **Clean green. Pure blue.**

## **Thank you for joining us!**

First off, we'd like to thank you for rolling up your sleeves and helping us clean up Marine Debris. Inside this little pack, you will find information on the cause of marine debris and what we can do to combat it. Whether you're taking part in an International Cleanup, are joining us down the beach or are just keen on doing it yourself, there will be some do's and don'ts to help you be clean green and pure blue. So, let us begin.

# The Big Blue and Marine Debris

Maybe it's because we're surrounded by the stuff but us Kiwis love the ocean. It's our playground, our inspiration and one of our most important resources. Each and every one of us is intimately connected to it. In fact, the ocean is awesome in an awesome sense of the word.

The ocean covers most of the planet and is home to 97 percent of life on Earth. Apart from being there to swim in, it also drives and moderates our climate and weather. It is the ultimate source of the water we drink and much of the air we breathe. It's also home to millions of animals, including the world's largest and our favourite - the mighty whale. But unfortunately our ocean is sick, and us humans are to blame.

For whatever reason, we've allowed rubbish and other pollutant to get into the ocean, directly affecting its health, the health of the animals that live in it, and our own. And that's pretty dumb.

***'Marine mammals often mistake floating plastic debris for food or accidentally swallow it'***

Each year more than 7 billion tonnes of rubbish makes its way into the sea. On its journey it kills, maims and injures wildlife and pollutes the ecosystems that they depend on for food, shelter, and to raise their young. Thousands of animals die each year, become trapped in or choke on the rubbish that we throw away. Even the great whales are no match for marine debris and us humans are slowly succumbing to the effects of too many plastics and other harmful chemicals that find it's way into our food chain.

***'In March '09 a Blue Whale washed up dead on the north east coast of the South Island in New Zealand. Several metres of shipping rope where later found in its throat and gut'***

Marine debris comes in many shapes and forms, from cigarette butts to plastic bags, fishing gear, bits of boats and aluminium cans. There's even nastier stuff such as used diapers, condoms or syringes. Most marine debris will not biodegrade, which means it will stay in the environment for hundreds of years, if not forever.

## Where does Marine Debris come from?

The simple answer is us lot. Humans. Marine debris may be dumped or blown off ships and stationary platforms at sea, but 80% of it comes from us land-lubbers.

Litter can travel to the ocean from many miles inland, blown on the wind or carried along by rivers and streams. It's not difficult to happen. For example, a plastic carrier bag carried from a store in Te Puke, may blow from a picnic table, wash down a storm drain to the river and wind up being swallowed by a whale.

Ok, that might sound far fetched but in August '00, a Bryde's whale died in Trinity Bay, Australia. A post-mortem found that the whale's stomach was full of plastic; supermarket bags, food packages, bait bags, and three large sheets of plastic. It had no food in its stomach.

Floating debris looks like food to a lot of marine animals. You just have to think of the times you've jumped out of the water after mistaking a floating carrier bag for a jellyfish before pulling it from the water and chucking it in a bin.

Then of course, there's overflowing sewage systems and storm drains that add to the burden by ferrying rubbish from rural roads and city streets to the sea. And, despite regulations against dumping, some boaties still drop rubbish directly into the ocean. In recent years, organic materials that were once the most prevalent component of marine debris have been supplanted by synthetics. Not only do items like packing straps, tarps, nets, and containers last for years, but also they are often highly buoyant, traveling thousands of miles on ocean currents.

- **Shoreline and Recreational Activities.** The majority of marine debris comes from land-based activities like eating fast food and discarding the wrappers, beach trips, picnics, sports and recreation, even festivals. Litter washes into the ocean from streets, car parks, and storm drains.
- **Ocean/Waterway Activities.** People engaged in recreational fishing and boating, commercial fishing, cargo/military/cruise ship operations, and offshore industries such as oil drilling contribute to marine debris.
- **Smoking-related Activities.** Careless disposal of cigarette filters, cigar tips, lighters, and tobacco product packaging is common on both land and sea.
- **Dumping.** Legal and illegal dumping of domestic and industrial garbage, construction materials, or large household appliances puts big quantities of harmful items into the ocean.
- **Medical/Personal Hygiene.** Items ranging from tampons and disposable diapers to syringes enter the water most often through sewer systems.

**Time it takes for items to break down in the marine environment**

Fruit 2 weeks	Paper towel 2-4 weeks
Newspaper 3 weeks	Cotton cloth 1-5 months
Cardboard box 2 months	Milk carton 3 months
Tin can 1-3 years	Natural fibre rope 14 months
Cigarette Butt 10 years	Styrofoam cup 50 years
Plastic bag 100-400 years	6 pack rings 400 years
Plastic bottles 450 years	Glass bottles 300 years
Aluminium can 200-500 years	Monofilament fishing net 600 years

Source: Ocean Conservancy, 2006

(Figures on the amount of time it takes for durable debris items to break down in the environment may vary. Degradation of items depends upon the material type, size, thickness, and environmental conditions (for example time exposed to sunlight) The bottom line is it takes a very long time).

# So, What Can We Do?

**Well, you've already taken a positive step by reading this but there are other ways you can help. The 3 most practical ways are:**

- 1. Take part in a PJ beach clean up. We run clean ups every couple of months. Check out [www.projectjonah.org.nz/events](http://www.projectjonah.org.nz/events) for details.**
- 2. Organise your own beach cleanup (see page 5 for in-depth details).**
- 3. Daily beach clean. If you're lucky enough to be able to go for a walk on a beach each day, why not pick up litter along your way.**

Then of course, there are some other things you could do each day that will help such as:

- Say 'no' to plastic bags at the check-out. Take your own reusable bags or boxes with you.
- Buy loose fruit and veg at the supermarket. There's no need to bag them.
- Buy meat from the meat counter. Pre-packaged meat is wrapped in more plastic.
- Buy soft drinks in cans or glass bottles.
- Choose brands with the least packaging and write to your favourite producers and tell them their packaging bothers you. Consumer choice is a powerful tool.
- Reuse plastic bags that you've accumulated as garbage liners. Better yet, let your rubbish bin go naked! A quick swirl of water after it's been emptied into the council bin outside will have it looking and smelling as good as new.
- If you have to use plastic bags then make sure they're biodegradable. These can be bought online from [zerowaste.co.nz](http://zerowaste.co.nz) and [ecostore.co.nz](http://ecostore.co.nz), but phone or write to your local supermarket and ask them to get them in.
- Look for products that use recycled plastic - look for the Envirochoice label.
- Separate your recyclables from your other rubbish and prepare it for collection. Rinse it and remove the caps, cap rings and base cups from plastic bottles. These accessories may be made from other types of plastic and by removing them you will help reduce processing time and expense.
- Put your rubbish in a secure, lidded bin – most marine debris starts out on land.
- Use your own permanent food containers for picnics instead of using disposables.
- Got an old mobile phone? Then take it back to your supplier. These phones are tested, repaired, refurbished and reused or the components stripped from them and the plastic melted down.
- Put cigarette butts in ashtrays, not on streets, pavements or beaches.
- When boating, bring your oil cans, food wrappers and cigarette butts back to shore, and be sure to ask your marina to handle waste properly.
- Spread the word. Reduce, recycle and reuse! Encourage your friends and family to do the same.
- Less is more: Don't buy stuff you don't need that will just end up as trash.

## **Organising Your Own Beach Cleanup Event.**

If you'd like to organise your own event at a beach near you, even better! Please call us to register your event so we can help you plan. But here's what you'll need to know.

### **Before the Cleanup:**

- Identify the beach or area that you'd like to clean. Is there public access, or is it on private land?
- Speak to your local council and seek permission if necessary.
- Think about how you will dispose of the rubbish collected. Will the council collect it or will you need to drop it off at a recycling centre or take it home?
- Visit the proposed site. Decide where you will set up your meeting area for your volunteers, and which area you want them to clean. Are toilets and cleaning up facilities available?
- Decide a start and finish time.
- Write up a risk management plan:
  - Do you have a first-aid kit for small emergencies like cuts and scrapes?
  - Do any of your volunteers have medical training or know basic first aid?
  - What would you do in the event of a major health emergency (heat exhaustion or heatstroke, a broken leg, etc) Where is the closest hospital? Do you know how to get there?
- Contact your local animal/wildlife rescue centre to let them know that you're organizing a cleanup. Ask them what to do if you find injured wildlife.
- Advertise your event to recruit more volunteers (contact us for posters).
- Make sure everyone knows where they're going on the day and what time you want them to be there.
- Remind participants to bring gloves, hats, boots or closed shoes, sunscreen, snacks and lots of water.
- Better data means better decision making.

To combat the rising tide of ocean debris we need to know exactly what's out there. Armed with knowledge we can educate the public, business and government about the scale of the problem and pinpoint the main offenders. Data collection isn't everyone's cup of tea, but if you can help us catalogue what you find you'll help us paint a more accurate picture of what's really going on. It's always best to gather data as you go along so be prepared with blank data cards and some clipboards and pens. Contact us for Data cards.

### **On the day:**

- Arrive well before the other volunteers. Organise and set up a check-in area. Ensure you have:
  - Registration Forms.
  - Disclaimer Forms.
  - Photo / Video Release Forms (if you intend to take photo or video footage on the day).
  - Data cards, rubbish ID cards, pencils, clipboards (if you don't have clipboards you can create your own out of cardboard).

### **Note: Please contact us for copies of the above forms.**

- Ask all volunteers to check-in and sign the necessary forms.
- Brief your volunteers. Make sure they understand what they have to do. They should know the importance of data collection; how to fill out the report forms; what to do if they find dead or entangled animals.
  - Dead wildlife can usually simply be left alone. However, dead entangled animals should be removed because other animals may become entangled with them.
  - All wildlife entanglements and injuries should be reported on the data cards.
- Ensure all volunteers receive a health and safety briefing and sign a disclaimer form.
  - Find out which of your volunteers have medical training or know basic first aid.
  - Ask anyone with pre-existing medical conditions to let their team leader know.
  - Instruct all volunteers to wear durable gloves and closed-toed shoes, to avoid lifting heavy objects and drink plenty of water, wear sunscreen etc.
  - Ask volunteers to take extreme care when handling sharp objects, syringes and sewage (condoms and tampons). Needles and syringes should be put in plastic needle collection containers for proper disposal (these can be provided to you). Children should be instructed NOT TO TOUCH any of these items.
- Remind your volunteers to stay out of the dunes and natural areas and to avoid disturbing wildlife.
- You will need to divide volunteers into groups or pairs. Each team should be given several bags, so they can collect and sort as they go (we can provide you with heavy duty 60L biodegradable collection bags). Separate recyclable waste from non-recyclable waste. One person should be designated the "data captain" and be responsible for recording the items picked up by the other volunteers on the data card (they can call out the items as they go). This person will become familiar with the card in short order, making this task easier.
- Decide how you will divide the clean-up area, ie whether you will 'sweep' the beach in a line or whether you'll divide it into grids or quadrants.
- Instruct the volunteers on what they are to do with the filled bags of rubbish.

- Ask volunteers to report back at the check-in area at an agreed time. If volunteers need to leave early ensure that their completed data cards are collected from them.
- Ask volunteers to return the cards to the check-in station immediately after the Cleanup. Place a clearly labeled box at the check-in station where the cards can be returned. Review the cards to ensure they are properly filled out.
- Thank your volunteers for their help.
- If your local council has agreed to collect your rubbish at the end of the day, ensure that it is left in a secure location where it won't blow away. Alternatively, dispose of the collected rubbish at a refuse or recycling centre or take it home with you for suitable disposal.

### **After the clean up**

- Return all data cards to Project Jonah at PO Box 8376 Symonds Street, Auckland, 1150.
- Let us know what went well and what didn't! We can collect lessons learned and best practice for future activities.
- Send us photos and stories from the day so we can add these to our website.

Events like Beach Cleanups really do make a difference, whether making the local beach or coastline free of debris or raising awareness and empowering employees or individuals to take action and support a healthier, more resilient ocean. For more information call us on 09 302 3106 or email us on [\*\*info@projectjonah.org.nz\*\*](mailto:info@projectjonah.org.nz)