

# SPO



# Maine State Planning Office

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## **Maine Coastal Cleanup Highlights Coastweek 2008** *Citizens Volunteer during Coastweek – September 20-27*

AUGUSTA – Mainers eager to keep their shorelines and coastal watersheds beautiful will take part in Coastal Cleanup this fall during Maine Coastweek, September 20-27. Sponsored annually by the Maine Coastal Program, Coastal Cleanup is the largest single volunteer effort in the state – last year 2,495 citizens of all ages and backgrounds joined forces to pick up 13,490 pounds of trash and debris from 135 miles of Maine’s shoreline.

“Everyone knows how disappointing it can be to visit a beach and find it covered in trash,” says Coastweek Coordinator Theresa Torrent-Ellis of the Maine Coastal Program. “But shoreline debris isn’t just an aesthetic blight. This same debris, floating in the water, can damage boats by fouling propellers or rudders. For animals marine debris can be a matter of life and death, as thousands perish each year after eating or getting entangled in six pack rings, ghost nets, and old fishing line.”

Where does all the trash come from? Cigarette butts continue to be number one on the “dirty dozen” list of most common debris. Much of the trash results from careless beach goers, boaters, fishing vessels, and ships. Some is washed from roads, yards, and parking lots into storm drains, streams, and rivers which then flow to the sea.

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Coastal Cleanup volunteers meet at a specified site, pick up trash, and record the type and amount of debris found. This data is reported to the Ocean Conservancy, which helps experts pinpoint the sources of marine debris and devise solutions. To register a cleanup group or join an existing one in your area, please visit the Coastweek web site at [www.maine coastweek.org](http://www.maine coastweek.org) or contact Theresa Torrent-Ellis at 287-2351 or 322-7887.

“The cleanup groups really have a lot of fun,” says Torrent-Ellis, “and at the same time they feel good about making a significant contribution to conserving our wonderful coastal resources.” Coastweek is part of the International Coastal Cleanup sponsored by Ocean Conservancy.

In addition to participating in Coastal Cleanup, everyone can have a hand in eliminating ocean debris at the source.

Here are some helpful suggestions:

- Pack your lunch in reusable containers;
- Buy items made from recycled materials with little or no packaging;
- Recycle when possible – many items picked up during Coastal Cleanup are recyclable;
- Use your own cup – avoid foam plastic cups which pose a serious hazard to marine life;
- Substitute paper, cloth, and other recyclable materials for plastic bags (wrap sandwiches in waxed paper);
- Don't buy drinks packaged with six-pack rings.

The Maine Coastal Program works with various partners toward the shared goal of a healthy coast and vibrant coastal communities. With a core staff based at the Maine State Planning Office, the Coastal Program also includes various state agencies, coastal municipalities, regional planning commissions, and many non-governmental partner organizations.



*“Nearly 2,500 volunteers participated in Maine’s Coastal Cleanup last year, picking up debris from shoreline areas such as the one pictured above in Saco.”*