



PR's Coasts used as trash cans: 142,126 pounds of debris collected in one day

Report shows recreational activities and cigarettes as top debris items

The results of the International Coastal Cleanup led by Scuba Dogs in September 2005 in Puerto Rico showed that 94% of the debris collected originated from recreational and smoking-related activities. These findings were recently published by The Ocean Conservancy, an organization based in Washington D.C. that for over 20 years has led this cleanup in nearly 100 countries as a means to promote environment conservation.

Alberto Martí, president of Scuba Dogs, a leading organization in environment protection projects, said that "as part of this cleanup, each country gathers information regarding the amount and type of debris that is collected from the beaches and waterways to identify the sources of the debris and to change behaviors that cause pollution".

He added that in Puerto Rico 7,726 volunteers came out to clean up shorelines and waterways including beaches, rivers, lakes and mangroves and collected 142,126 pounds of debris. Of this amount, 67.4% originated from shoreline and recreational activities and 26.6% from smoking related activities (cigarette filters, cigar tips, and tobacco packaging), while only 3.5% of the debris came from ocean and waterway activities.

"We're aware that the contamination of our waterways, but with these findings we can also pinpoint that the source of this debris are the manufacturing companies and regular consumers improperly discarding this solid waste", Martí pointed out. The report from the Ocean Conservancy also lists the "top ten" debris items found in the coastal cleanup in Puerto Rico last September:

1. Cigarettes (24.3%)
2. Caps and lids (12.1%)
3. Glass beverage bottles (8.2%)
4. Cups, plates and utensils (8.2%)
5. Plastic beverage bottles (7.9%)
6. Straws and stirrers (6.4%)
7. Pull tabs (5.3%)



8. Food wrappers (4.8%)
9. Beverage cans (4.5%)
10. Bags (3.5%)

In terms of these findings, Martí said that “debris is durable and buoyant, with the capacity to travel thousand of miles. Thus, traveling from inner city and towns, to the coast and the bottom of the ocean damaging all the ecosystems found along its way”.

The International Coastal Cleanup this year will be on Saturday, September 16. Elsa Sánchez, vice president of Scuba Dogs, said that the goal is to clean over 100 beaches and waterways covering more than 200 coastal miles. “To be able to do this, our objective is to recruit and train 100 Coast Captains to direct the 10,000 volunteers we hope to have for the cleanup that day”. Coast Captains can be individuals or organizations committed to preserve our waterways in our country.

“This effort is an opportunity for the community to get together, along with the government and private companies, and take action to protect our environment”, Sánchez added. The cleanup will also be used to plant trees in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources, place trash cans and rescue marine species entangled in the debris to promote environment preservation.

More information on the International Coastal Cleanup and how to participate as a captain can be found by visiting www.scubadogs.net, calling 787-783-6377, by fax at 787-783-6377, and by e-mail at limpieza@scubadogs.net.

In 2005 the International Coastal Cleanup was the largest environment-conservation event in the world. It gathered more than 450,000 volunteers who collected 8.2 pounds of debris in coastal areas that covered 18,000 in nearly 100 countries.

About Ocean Conservancy and Scuba Dogs

The Ocean Conservancy has worked for more than three decades toward the preservation of ocean ecosystems. Scuba Dogs has led local efforts to conserve the environment and marine ecosystem among which are the “Trash Fish” educational campaign and has participated in the National Jury of the Blue Flag program. They also promote the creation of an artificial reef underwater park, coastal refostering projects,



educational programs for youngsters, installation of trash cans, and bouys for ships, among others

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