



PUGET SOUNDKEEPER®

2025 International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Report





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Puget Soundkeeper acknowledges that we are on the lands of the Coast Salish peoples who have always been, and will continue to be, stewards of these lands and waters. We acknowledge the past and present harms to Indigenous and marginalized peoples, and the land and waters of this region.

Since 1984, we've worked to protect and enhance our shared waters and we pledge to care for our shared ecosystems for many more years ahead.



MARINE DEBRIS IN WASHINGTON STATE

Marine debris consists of human-made trash and other discarded materials that enter our watersheds and other aquatic environments directly or indirectly. Once this debris enters the ecosystem, it can drift far distances through tides and currents and, unfortunately, entangle and harm wildlife.

Marine debris varies widely in size, ranging from microplastics as small as a grain of sand all the way to abandoned or derelict boats. Some common sources of debris in the Puget Sound and other waterways in Washington include:

- Plastic, metal, and foam pieces smaller than 5 mm (microplastics)
- Cigarette butts
- Fishing line and netting
- Foam docks
- Straws and plastic utensils
- Tires

Changing weather patterns and tides, economic burdens, and sparsely available equipment and professional staff can make it a challenge to remove these items. Against all odds, partners from all around Washington, including governments at all levels, Tribes, nonprofit organizations, and community groups, are working every day to reduce marine debris pollution.

MICROPLASTICS

Macro problems!

Microplastics are defined as plastic materials smaller than 5 millimeters (mm).

Due to various challenges with recycling plastics, they usually end up in landfills or in the environment. Plastics do not decompose, but rather break down into tiny pieces, exposing humans and wildlife to these harmful bits!

Microplastics are found everywhere and easily enter our bodies through the air, water, and even our food! They are especially harmful because they build up in the food chain, meaning larger animals (& humans!) end up taking in more microplastics over time.



The 5 common types of microplastics are identified as:

Fragments

Derived from larger plastic waste
Ragged, irregular in shape

Pellets

Common in facial and body scrubs
Rigid, hard, and globular in shape

Line

Also known as filaments
From textiles fibers
Elongated thread-like structure

Film

Fragmentation of plastic bags
& packaging
Thin, transparent, & soft

Foam

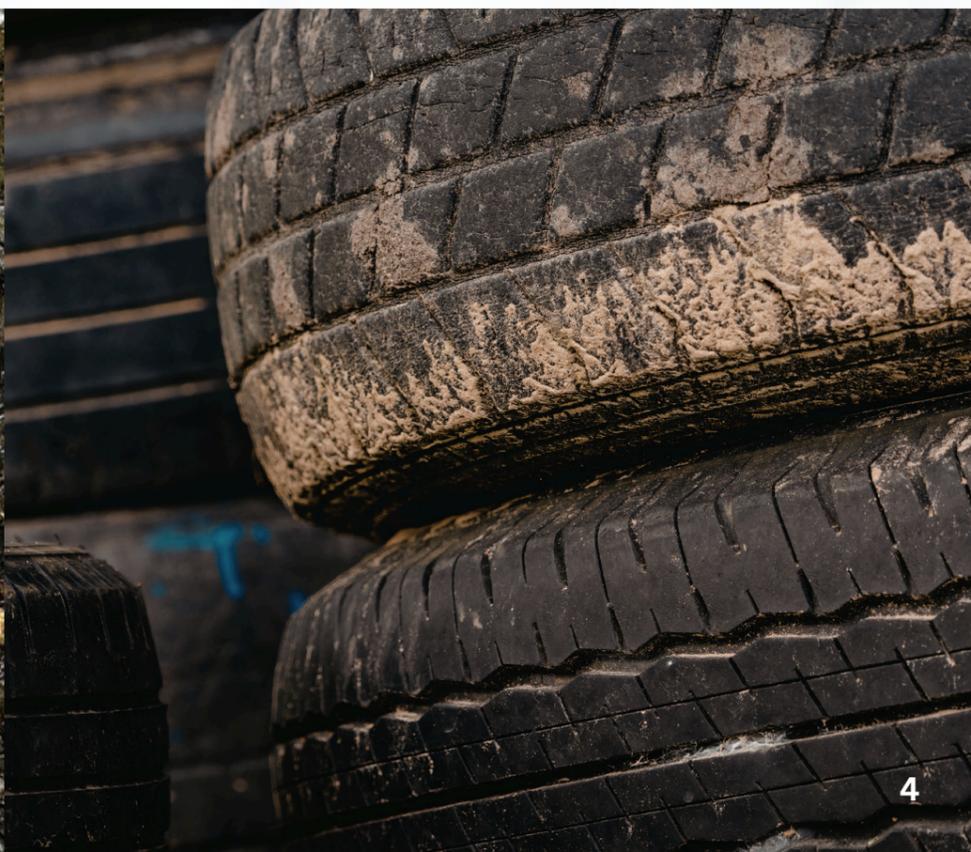
From takeaway containers & cups
Lightweight, porous, easily
breaks down

TIRES & 6PPD

6PPD is a chemical used to protect our tires from cracking and blowouts. More specifically, this chemical reacts with ozone, transforming into 6PPD-quinone (or 6PPD-Q). As you drive, tire dust containing 6PPD-Q travel into waterways through stormwater runoff.

Recent studies show that 6PPD-Q is extremely toxic to Coho salmon and other salmonids, causing pre-spawn mortality, or the death of these fish before they lay their eggs. This threatens not only the survival of the species, but ecosystem resilience, Indigenous culture, and food sovereignty.

Ongoing efforts are being made by scientists to evaluate further health impacts from 6PPD and 6PPD-Q, as well as legislative strides to place wider policy restrictions on 6PPD in tires.

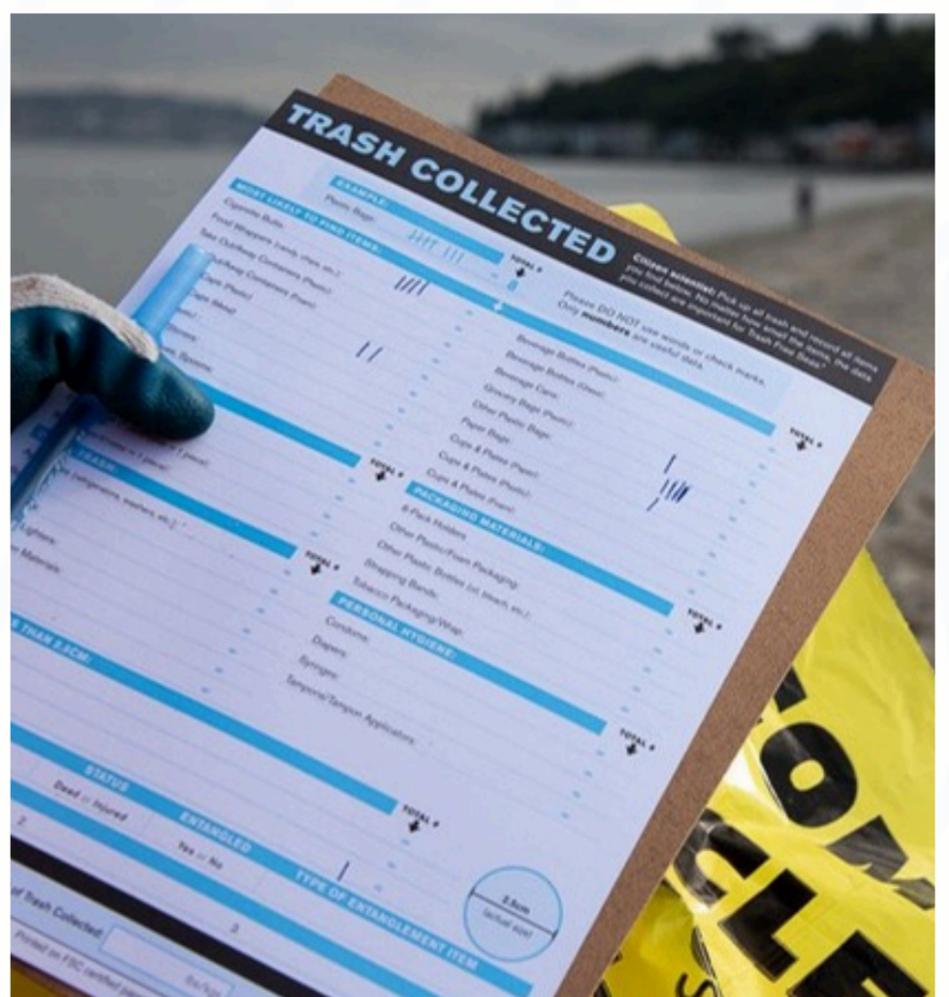


What is International Coastal Cleanup (ICC)?

Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) is the largest global effort to unite organizations and individuals in protecting our oceans and waterbodies. During ICC events, volunteers remove trash from waterways, document debris sources, and support lifestyle and policy changes aimed at preventing further marine litter.

Participants collect data at the quantitative scale, recording the specific types and quantities of debris using data cards or the Ocean Conservancy's Clean Swell app. Once analyzed, this data helps inform local, regional, and international legislation and other data-backed solutions to protect our aquatic environments.

Puget Soundkeeper serves as a regional coordinator for ICC cleanups across the Puget Sound and the Western Washington area. This report highlights the efforts of community partners, groups, and individuals who participated in the Puget Sound ICC program from August through December of 2025.



Puget Soundkeeper's 2025 International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Event

On September 20, 2025, Puget Soundkeeper and A Cleaner Alki rallied 137 volunteers on a sunny Saturday for their annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC), held at Alki Beach and Myrtle Edwards Park. Together, participants removed 137 pounds of trash from the shoreline – an average of one pound per volunteer – in a community effort that emphasized precision and impact over sheer volume.

What set this cleanup apart was the intentional focus on removing the smallest pieces of litter. Volunteers were challenged to seek out micro-trash and debris that often goes unnoticed but pose significant threats to wildlife and ecosystems. Participants rose to the challenge, targeting materials like confetti, cigarette butts, and other materials that escape the average person's eye.

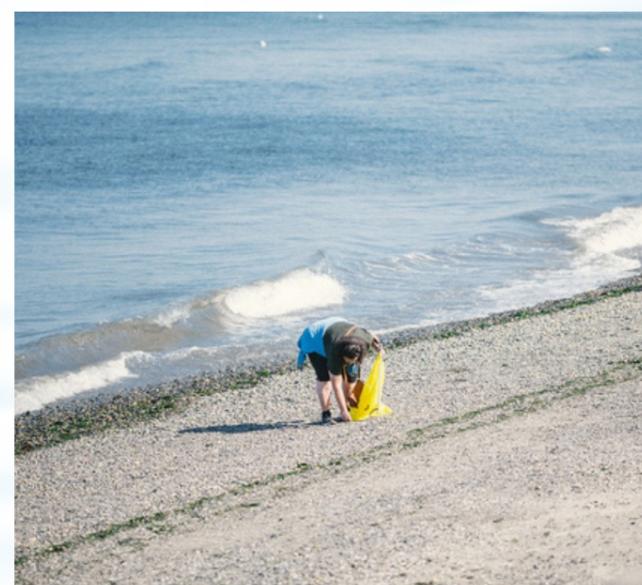
“These cleanups aren't just about picking up trash; they're about connecting people to their local waterways in a meaningful way.

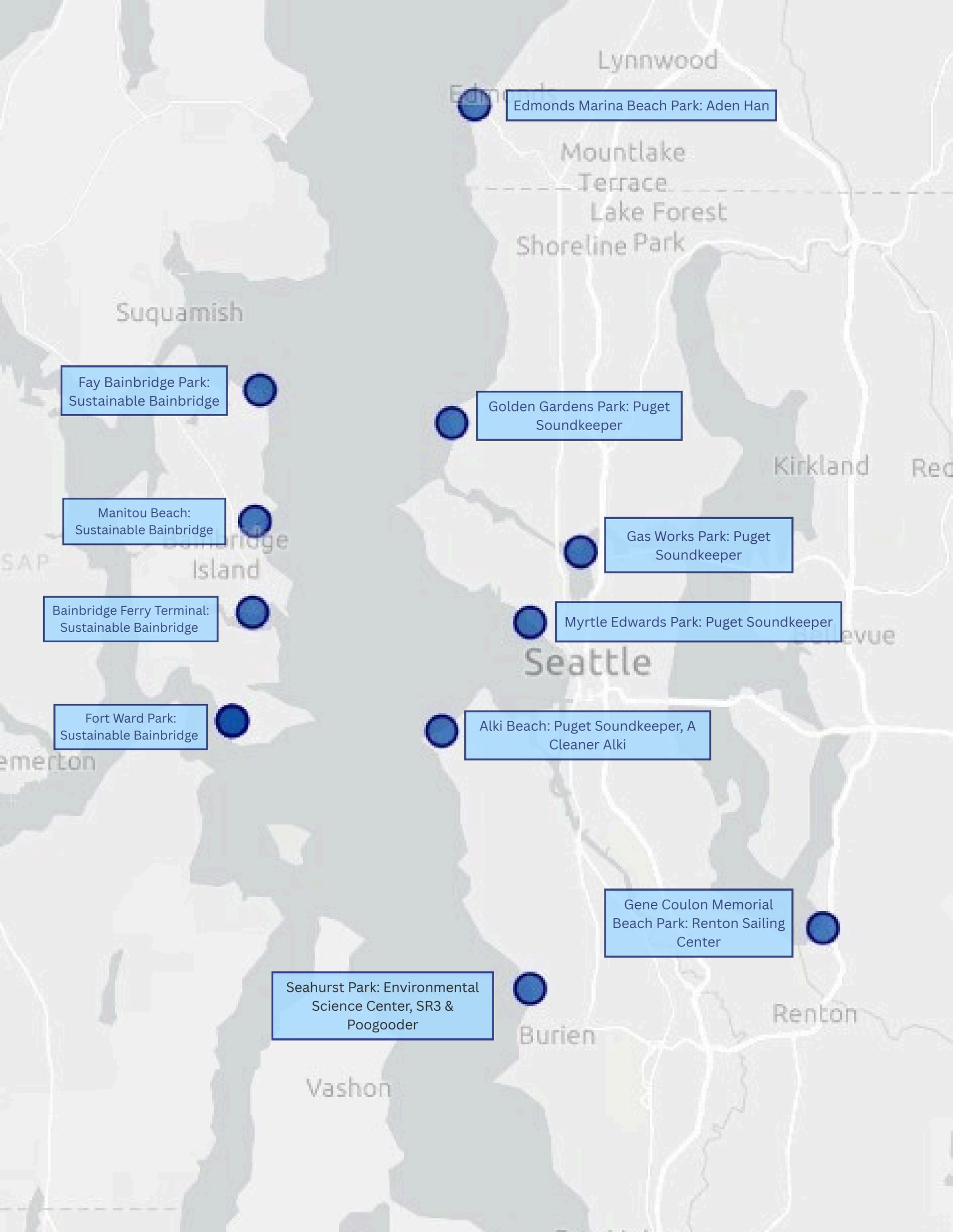
When volunteers pause and see firsthand how polluted our environment is, they begin to understand the scope of the problem. And with that understanding comes a sense of urgency – and the inspiration to take action,” said Tanya Balaji, Stewardship and Education Manager at Puget Soundkeeper.



Photo Credit: Edward Yamut

Tiny Trash, Mighty Volunteers: More Photos from Alki Beach!





Central Puget Sound 2025 ICC Partner Map

** Not visible on map - Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve: RE Sources/ North Sound Waterkeeper (Bellingham, WA)

Partner Highlight: Environmental Science Center



What is ESC's mission?

“Our mission is to promote environmental stewardship and academic achievement through science-based education in south King County. We provide safe and positive outdoor experiences for our community in South King County, inspiring a deeper connection with nature and life-long stewardship actions.”



What other programming do you all do?

“We offer programs for all ages and interests! We offer 3 school field trips: a low-tide beach walk (K-3), salmon and stormwater health exploration (4-8), and an impacts of climate change investigation (high school). We prioritize working with Title I schools and offering program and transportation subsidies to offset costs.

For our FREE public programs, we offer seasonal science events based on programming our community asks for. This includes programs such as facilitated bird walks, a beach naturalist program, watershed field trips, seasonal festivals, salmon viewing, invasive plant removal days, family STEM drop-in science times, toddler story times, and more. We strive to offer programs in places our community is already gathering to make learning more accessible.”

What's your favorite part about ICC?

“My favorite part of ICC is seeing the community come together to make a difference in their local environment. Since I started at ESC, I've seen a change in the amount and type of debris we remove. We remove less and less trash every year, which helps us show our community their work has a direct impact. It also gives our community a way to slow down to build that appreciation for the habitat as they are now specifically looking for small pieces of trash that could more easily become a part of the food chain. It's a great event to help folks understand that collective action has a direct, local impact for humans and wildlife.” ~Katy Kachmarik



How can people get involved?

“Folks are welcome to join us at one of our free community programs throughout the year to get involved with ESC. Folks can find our event calendar, learn more about ESC, and fill out a volunteer application on our website at: <https://www.envsciencecenter.org/>. We also have a Facebook (@EnvironmentalScienceCenter), Instagram (@environmental.sciencecenter), and Tiktok (@enviro.sciencecenter) to help keep folks up to date on events and nature news!”

Beach Captain Highlight: Aden Han!

Meet Aden, Puget Soundkeeper's youngest ICC Beach Captain in history! With help from his mom, Aden coordinated a cleanup at Marina Beach Park in Edmonds, Washington!



What inspired you to join Puget Soundkeeper's mission?

"I have always loved the ocean and wanted to give back to it. Even small cleanups, done over and over, can make a big difference. It might seem hard at first, but it's easier than you think and it really helps the ocean."

What did you learn from leading your first ICC event?

"I learned that even places that look really clean can still have a lot of hidden trash and waste. When people do cleanups, they help remove harmful garbage that can hurt plants and animals. Cleanups help protect local ecosystems and keep nature healthy. Even small efforts can make a big difference in keeping our environment clean and safe. I also learned that recruiting volunteers is not easy. For future cleanups, I plan to work more actively with Key Club students from nearby schools to get more help and make a bigger impact."



How do you think other kids can get involved and make a difference in their community? *"I think it is really easy to get involved. Ask your parents to find a nearby cleanup and participate!"*

2025 ICC STATS

Central Puget Sound

561



Volunteers

13,188



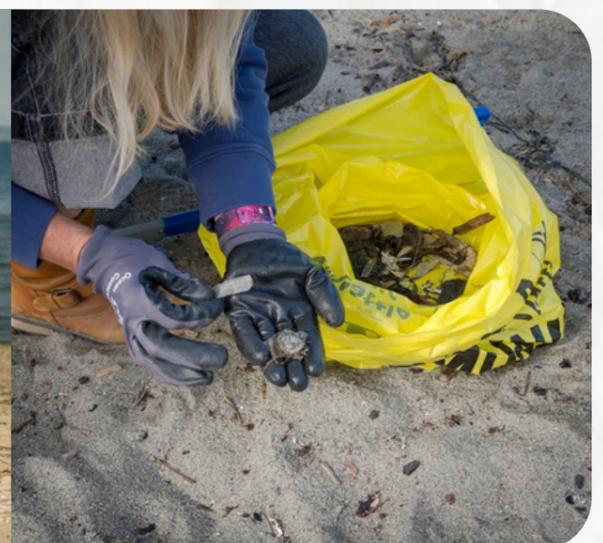
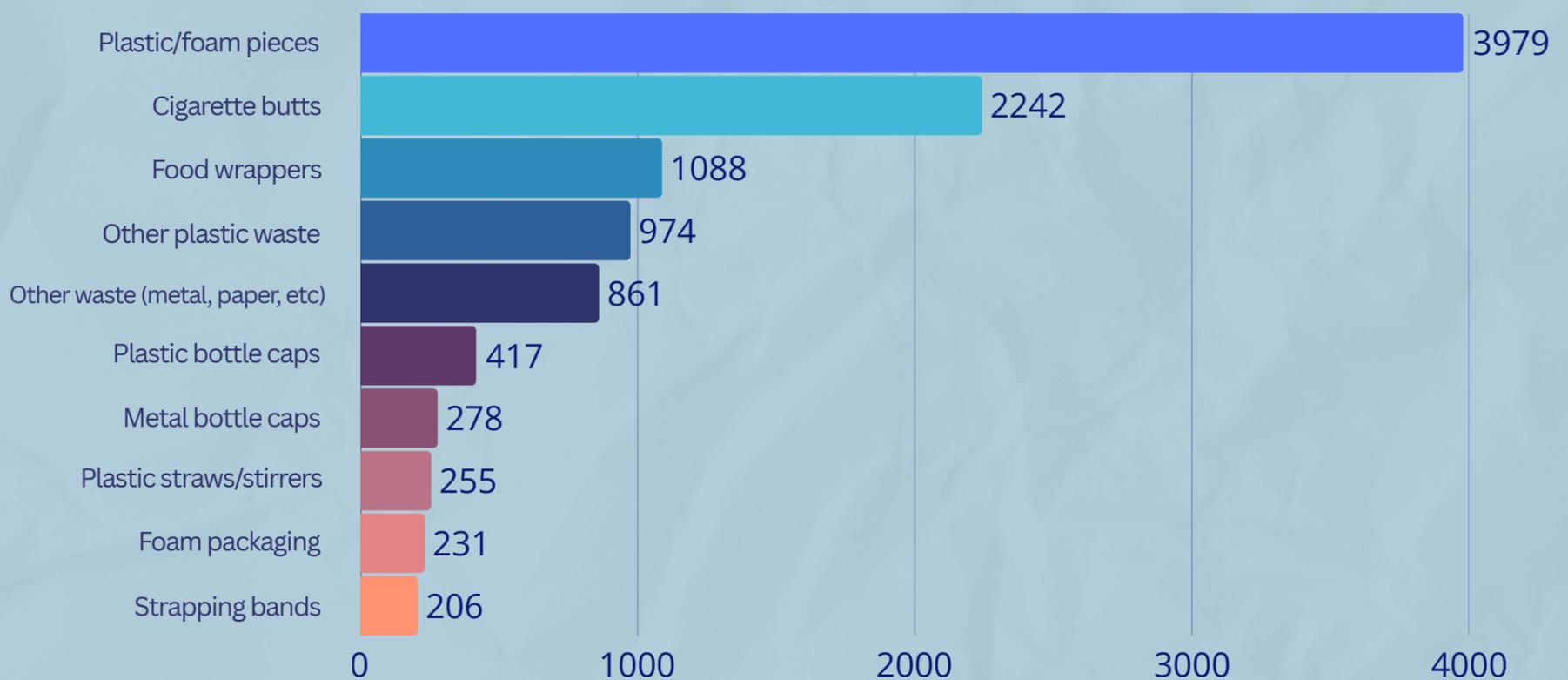
**Pieces of Trash
Collected**

2,181



Pounds of Debris

Top 10 Items Found

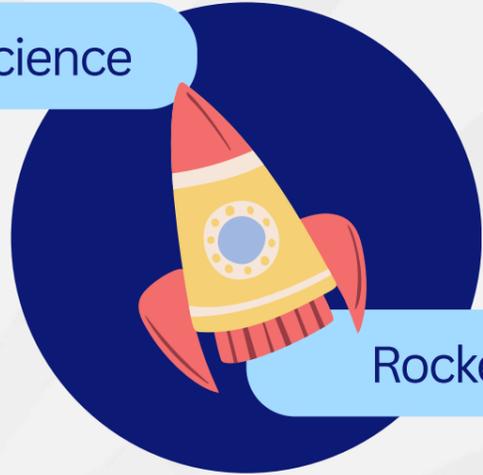


Funky Finds!



Ceramics

Science

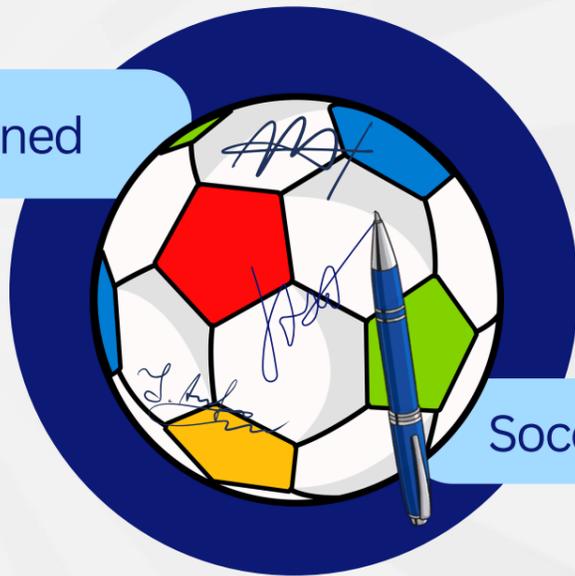


Rocket

Inhaler



Signed



Soccer Ball

Socks



Positive



Pregnancy Test



Raincoat

Unusual finds from our ICC cleanups!

How has ICC data influenced positive legislation across the US?

Ban on Plastic Packaging for Salt in the Gulf of Mexico



In 1990, ICC data analysts noticed that volunteers in the Gulf of Mexico reported finding Morton's "Ship 'n Shore" salt. This packaging was used by commercial shrimpers to keep their catch fresh. While Morton wasn't responsible for the improper disposal of its products, they took action when they observed the data and encouraged the public to purchase salt in paper bags that are biodegradable, as opposed to plastic packaging.

Florida Bans Intentional Balloon Releases to Protect Wildlife

In July 2024, Florida lawmakers officially banned intentional balloon releases as a way to protect its biodiversity from the dangers of plastic packaging. ICC data collected across Florida beaches showed how common balloon debris was, and highlighted the negative impacts of the debris on local wildlife like sea turtles, whales, fish, and birds that call Florida home.



Recycling Gets a Refresh: Reform is In!

In the Spring of 2025, Governor Bob Ferguson signed the **Recycling Reform Act (SB 5284)** into law - marking a major step towards a more sustainable Washington. Championed by Senator Liz Lovelett (D-Anacortes) and Representative Liz Berry (D-Seattle), and driven by years of advocacy from Puget Soundkeeper and partners in the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), this landmark legislation will modernize the state's recycling system.

The Recycling Reform Act:

- Establish statewide standards with a **single, unified list of accepted recyclables**, reducing confusion and misinformation.
- Require companies selling packaged goods to join and fund a **Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)**, shifting the cost of collecting, sorting, and recycling packaging from consumers to producers.
- **Expand curbside recycling access** to 500,000+ more households statewide, including rural communities and apartment buildings.
- **Reduce recycling fees on utility bills** by placing financial responsibility where it belongs – on producers, not residents.



Photo Credit: [Ricky Osborne, Seattle/Olympia, Washington](#)

Recycling Gets a Refresh: Reform is In!

But how does this bill actually help curb pollution?

- **Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions** – recycling uses less energy than manufacturing from virgin materials, reducing fossil fuel use and air pollution.
- **Curbs Plastic Pollution in Waterways** - recycling systems, when well-funded and standardized, keeps plastic and other waste out of waterways, where it can break down into microplastics and harm wildlife.
- **Curbs Resource Extraction and Associated Pollution** – recycling products requires less mining, drilling, and logging than using raw materials which means reduced habitat destruction, soil erosion, toxic runoff, and air pollution
- **Diverts Products from the Landfills** - landfills can leak harmful chemicals and pollutants like methane into soil and groundwater. Recycling diverts waste from these systems, cutting back on the amount of pollution leaching from landfills.



Photo Credit: [Ricky Osborne, Seattle/Olympia, Washington](#)

Support our Efforts in 2026!

1 Host Your Own ICC Event!

Email Tanya Balaji, Puget Soundkeeper's Education and Stewardship Manager, to learn more about how to host your own ICC cleanup!

2 Join an ICC Event Near You!

Keep an eye out on our ICC events page for more information about ICC events that Puget Soundkeeper and are community partners are hosting!

3 Become a Member!

By donating \$20 (or more) or volunteering 4 hours of your time annually, you become part of our amazing community and receive exclusive perks, all while supporting our mission. Learn more about becoming a member here.

Reporting Pollution in the Puget Sound: See Something, Say Something!

Call the [Puget Soundkeeper Pollution Tip Line: 1-800-42PUGET](tel:1-800-42PUGET)

You can also email us at hotline@pugetsoundkeeper.org

Statewide:

- [Derelict Fishing Gear](#) (Dept. of Fish & Wildlife): (855) 542-3935
- [Derelict Boats](#) (Dept. of Natural Resources): (360) 902-2628
- [Navigation Hazards](#) (US Coast Guard Puget Sound): (206) 217-6200

Seattle, King County:

- [Seattle Public Utilities](#): (206) 386-1800
- [Seattle Harbor Patrol](#): (206) 684-4071
- [King County Illegal Dumping Hotline](#): (206) 477-4811
- [King County Stormwater Services](#): (206) 477-4811

Other:

- [Snohomish County Water Pollution Hotline](#): (425) 388-6481
- [Kitsap County Water Pollution Hotline](#): (360) 337-5777
- [Pierce County Public Works, Discharge to Streets](#): (253) 798-4274

Contact your Local Waterkeeper!

Puget Soundkeeper Alliance is not the only Waterkeeper organization advocating for clean water around the Puget Sound! You can also reach out to the organizations below if you're observing pollution in the north or south Sound!

- [RE Sources, North Sound Waterkeeper \(Bellingham, WA\)](#)
 - Tip Line: (360) 220-0556
 - Email: kirstenm@re-sources.org
- [Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team \(Olympia, WA\)](#)
 - Tip Line: (360) 358-1935
 - Email: olydert@gmail.com

2025 Puget Sound International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Coordinators and Partners

Thank you to all our 2025 ICC coordinators, beach captains, and partners that made this possible across the Puget Sound! Puget Soundkeeper is deeply grateful to work with a network of amazing organizations and humans doing meaningful and inspirational work to curb pollution across the Puget Sound, one piece of litter at a time.

Lastly, Puget Soundkeeper would like to give special thanks to the Ocean Conservancy for leading the ICC movement.

