



MEDIA RELEASE

Cleanup up our coastlines on International Coastal Cleanup Day 2018

Immediate Release

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On Saturday, 15 September 2018 citizens from around the world will engage in a mass coastal cleanup to remove thousands of tons of waste from beaches and waterways. International Coastal Cleanup Day plays an important role in fostering awareness around the issue of marine pollution. The Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) promotes responsible consumer waste management and would therefore like to encourage everyone to participate in their local coastal cleanup event to help protect our coastlines and marine environments.

South Africa boasts an impressive 3000 Kilometres of coastline, much of which has a concentration of residential housing and commercial activity. “While the beauty of our coastlines attracts people from far and wide, the high volumes of waste that is produced poses a major threat to our precious coastal environments,” says Leon Grobbelaar, president of the IWMSA. “Addressing marine pollution has become imperative to protect these ecologically sensitive areas and the many threatened and endangered species that inhabit these coastal marine environments”.

During the 2017 coastal cleanup efforts South African volunteers displayed an admirable awareness of marine pollution issues, picking up a total of 12 694 Kilograms of waste. A total of 16 298 people participated in last year’s effort, of which 4 755 recorded what they picked up. This data helped to identify trends and highlight culprit waste materials that are prominent in our coastal environments.

Food wrappers, especially chip packets, made from multi-layered plastics have been increasing in numbers on a yearly basis. It was the fourth highest item collected in 2016. In the 2017 cleanup, food wrappers were the prolific item collected. Asthma pumps are the most prolific item found out of the medicinal items¹. A concern is the fact that disposable syringes have been recorded in larger numbers in the 2017 clean up. Single use baby diapers have become more prominent each year. This is of a great concern as diapers can take up to 500 years to decompose.

“There is a clear need to effectively deal with waste items in coastal areas,” says Grobbelaar “Bin lids need to be closed at all times. When lids are open, the contents of the bin will be subjected to the wind

which will lift and carry waste items, especially light weight plastics, into the sea,” adds Grobbelaar. “These items will then be transported via ocean currents and waves and will most likely land up on beaches. Once on the beach, items fill with sand and lose their light weight properties and their ability to be transported further; this is the reason why items such as straws, food wrappers and plastic bags become prevalent on beaches.”

The global statistics from last year’s International Coastal Cleanup Day efforts show that 789 thousand people collected 9, 285 tonnes of waste over 30, 472 Kilometres of coastline². The data collected from the combined global cleanup efforts is collated by the Ocean Conservancy and a report is released on an annual basis.

“Find your closest local cleanup taking place on International Coastal Cleanup Day and encourage all your friends and family to participate with you,” say Grobbelaar “Ask the cleanup organiser for a waste data sheet to record what you pick up. This will contribute to the valuable data for the Ocean Conservancy’s 2018 cleanup report,” concludes Grobbelaar.

For more information on the IWMSA, visit www.iwmsa.co.za. The IWMSA is also on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>).

¹ *Plastics South Africa (2017). Coastal Cleanup Report*

² *Ocean Conservancy (2018). International Coastal Cleanup Report*

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