

GREAT CANADIAN
**Shoreline
Cleanup**
OCEAN WISE & WWF



A CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP BY

2021 Impact Report

HELP KEEP OUR WATER ECOSYSTEMS HEALTHY FOR EVERYONE



Our Collective Impact

It was remarkable to see eager volunteers reconnect with their communities and safely come together for the health of shorelines once again. An outstanding **19,508 participants** completed **1,998 cleanups** this year, more than doubling the number of cleanups from last year. These phenomenal efforts resulted in **31,522 kilograms** of trash being recovered from **2,219 kilometers** of shoreline. Shoreline Cleanup is proud of how we continuously adapted our program in response to evolving public health guidelines.

In 2021, we reached a total of **972,000 participants** since the program was founded in 1994. As we expand our program to more communities and shorelines across Canada in 2022, our goal will be to inspire more Canadians to join us in stopping plastics from entering our oceans and restoring our shorelines one cleanup at a time— not to mention **celebrating our one millionth participant!**

We hope you will join us in tackling the threat of plastic pollution. Here is how you can get involved:

- [Lead a Shoreline Cleanup](#)
- [Join a Shoreline Cleanup](#)
- [Become a Shoreline Champion with your work](#)

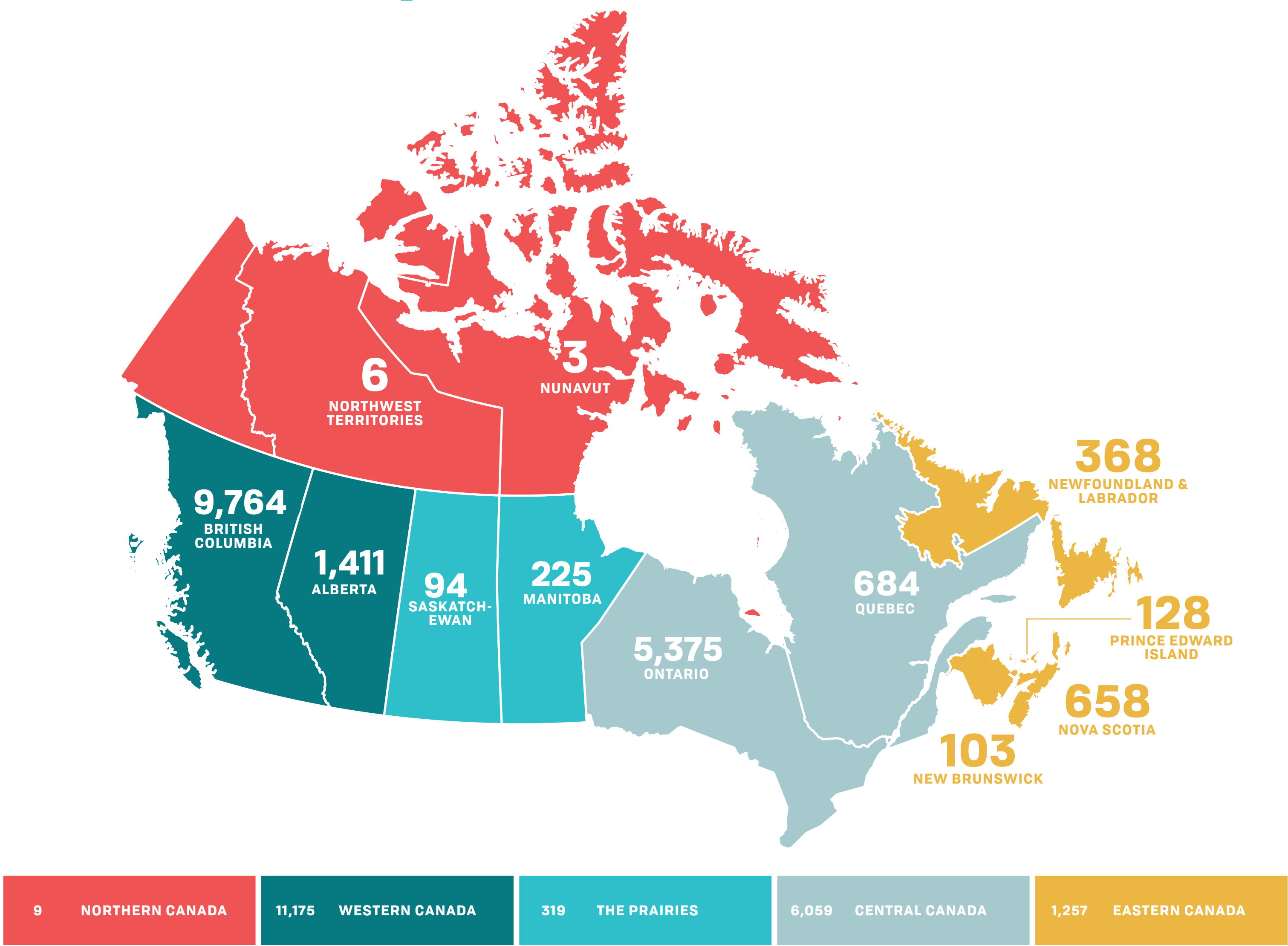
Measure your impact and learn how to reduce your plastic use by completing a home waste audit.



“ From humble beginnings in 1994 the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup has grown to become one of the country’s most effective direct-action programs. By empowering our volunteers to lead cleanups in their community we are making a significant impact on the litter leaking into our rivers, streams and ocean. Thanks to the comprehensive data records collected we’ve meaningfully affected municipal waste bylaws, bans on unnecessary single-use plastic and the choices of our business partners. ”

LASSE GUSTAVSSON
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF OCEAN WISE

2021 Participants by Location



Your Impact

Number of registered cleanups	1,998
Number of registered participants	19,508
Distance of shoreline cleaned (km)	2,219
Weight of litter removed (kg)	31,522
Trash bags filled	4,495
Recycling bags filled	1,172

Volunteers on the Shoreline

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES



COMMUNITY GROUPS INCLUDES OTHERS



WORKPLACE GROUPS



YOUTH GROUPS GUIDES & SCOUTS



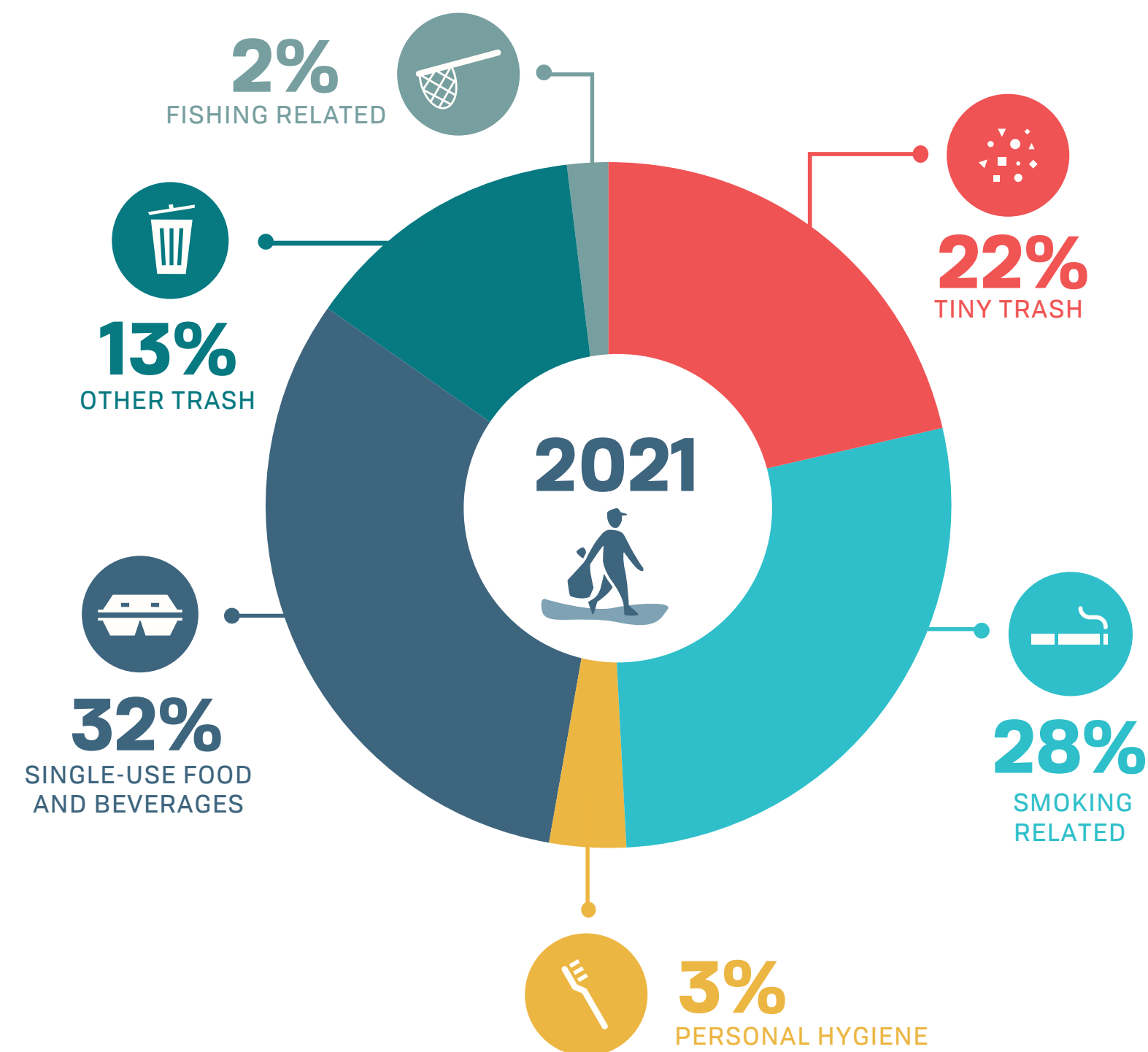


Litter and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world in many ways, including an increase in related litter showing up on shorelines. During 2020, our volunteers reported finding masks, gloves, and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items during cleanups. To better quantify this emerging threat to shoreline health, we decided to add a PPE category to our data cards. This has allowed us to track the additional burden pandemic-related waste is placing on the environment.

In 2021, our volunteers collected 11,085 PPE items on shoreline cleanups across the country. This places PPE items 12th on our Dirty Dozen list. With only one year of PPE data collected and the future of the COVID-19 pandemic still uncertain, it is too early to predict what the long-term effects will be on our shorelines. With that said, based on the data collected in 2021 alone, it is likely that PPE will continue to be a substantial source of pollution.

Types of Litter



Since the onset of the pandemic single-use food and beverage items collected during shoreline cleanups has increased by 17 per cent of all litter collected, more than doubling the proportion of similar items found in 2019.

The proportion of single-use food and beverage items has continued to climb since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, up from 27 per cent in 2020 to 32 per cent in 2021 of total litter collected each year.

This follows the increase from 2019 to 2020, when the proportion of single-use food and beverage items increased by 12 per cent. While these items have historically fluctuated from year to year in our cleanup data, it is worth noting the continued increase since 2019 and the pandemic began. Canada's proposed ban on harmful single-use plastics, which targets several single-use food and beverage items, offers hope to slow this increasing trend.

The 2021 Dirty Dozen

Each year, the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup identifies the 12 most found items on Canada’s freshwater and marine shorelines. This information is shared widely with governments, researchers, and the public to raise awareness about shoreline litter and inform solutions.

1.	Cigarette butts	146,614
2.	Plastic pieces	72,913
3.	Styrofoam pieces	44,592
4.	Food wrappers	43,201
5.	Bottle caps	33,576
6.	Paper	28,987
7.	Beverage cans	17,800
8.	Plastic bags	16,971
9.	Straws	12,480
10.	Plastic bottles	12,398
11.	Coffee cups and lids	12,145
12.	PPE (i.e., gloves, masks)	11,450



Yasmin Schepens

OCEAN BRIDGE AMBASSADOR “I believe that everything is connected and that every little thing we do makes a difference. I want to evoke respect, love and care for our planet and others. I do this by doing regular cleanups and some people get inspired and start doing cleanups too, without me telling them they should do it. I also love photography and capturing the beauty of nature. If more people see this beauty, they will appreciate it more and will take better care of it. Because we truly live on a remarkable planet full of wonder and I am so blessed I am a part of it.”

Looking Ahead; Canada's Single-Use Plastic Ban

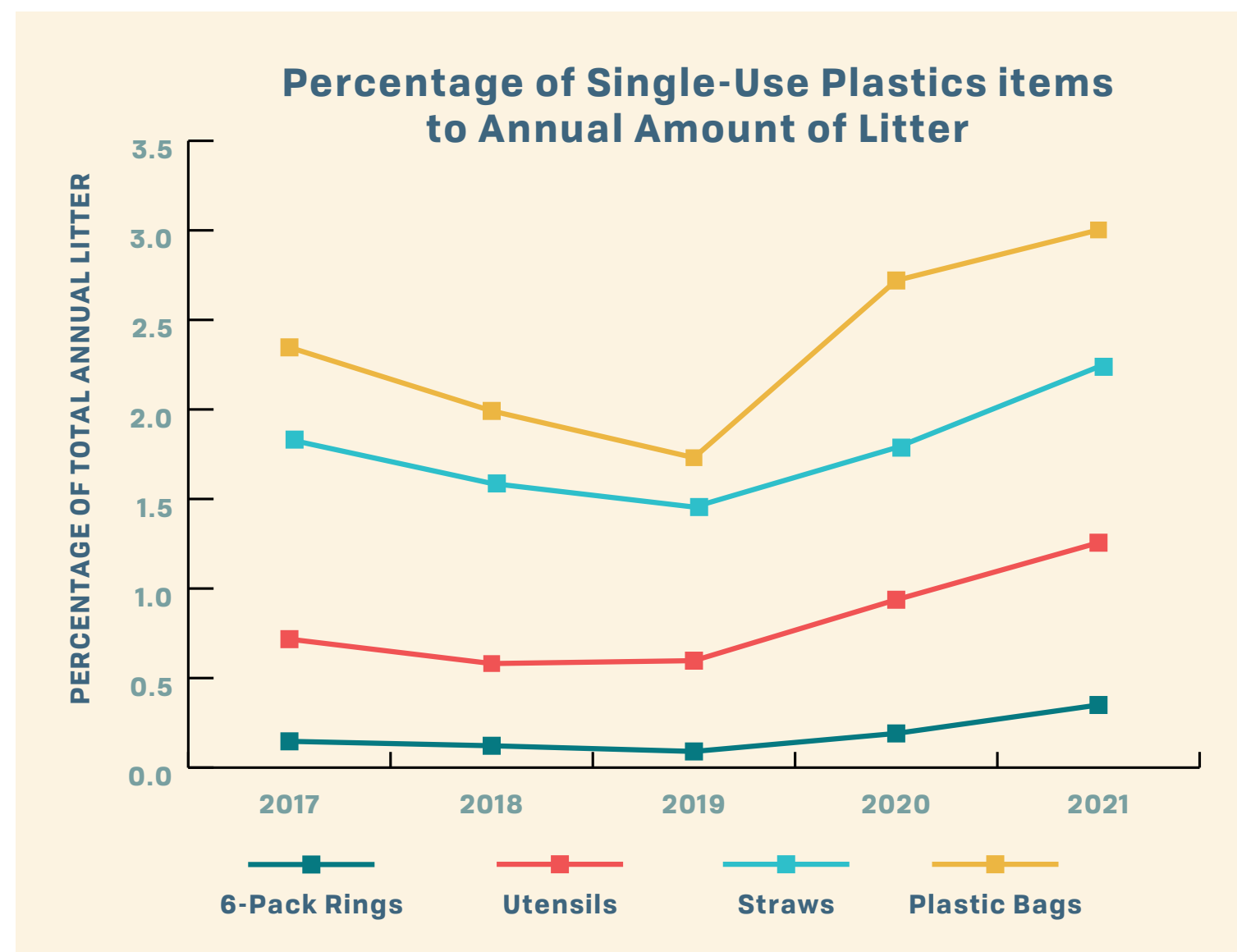
A huge victory in the fight against plastic pollution was achieved in 2021, with the Canadian Government classifying plastic manufactured items as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Municipalities across Canada have begun implementing bylaws in response to the Government of Canada's proposed ban on six types of single-use plastics: plastic checkout bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery, and food service ware made from hard-to-recycle plastics.

The contribution of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup in advancing this ban cannot be understated. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, we were able to track four of the six banned items over the last five years across the country: plastic bags, straws, six-pack rings, and cutlery. This citizen science data collected by our volunteers was then used to inform the Federal Government's Science Assessment of Plastic Pollution which preceded the ban. So far, our data has shown that the last two years of the pandemic are correlated with an increase in the number of single-use plastics litter. We hope that as the ban becomes fully implemented across Canada, we will start to see a decline in the banned items on shorelines.

Bylaws are unique to each municipality and have not been implemented concurrently. In fact, many will not come into effect until sometime in 2022. Given the coast-to-coast

presence of our volunteers, we have an exciting opportunity to track the effectiveness of the ban on both a national scale and provide regional reports to municipalities on shoreline litter.

While we celebrate this great progress together, there is still a lot of work needed to stop the leak of plastic pollution into our environment. We are looking forward to learning together through citizen science in the years to come and will strive to inform stronger government policy and industry solutions for plastic pollution.





Strange Things Found on the Shoreline

You never know what you are going to find on the shoreline. At each cleanup, we ask our volunteers to share their most unusual finds. We asked, and they delivered. After 27 years of shoreline cleanups, we are still surprised by the strangest items volunteers have reported, ranging anywhere from trash to treasure. It also serves as a reminder that items we don't typically imagine as litter can still make their way to our shorelines.

Strange Things Found on the Shoreline	
Message in a bottle	Kiddie plastic pool
Mannequin hand	Skateboard
Non-magic carpet	Plastic dinosaur leg
Vacuum cleaner	Hair straightener
Birthday cake	Hula hoop

Keep track of your stranger finds folks, they might be featured on this list next year!



Reaching New Shorelines

We're always on the lookout for new locations that we can protect from litter and plastic pollution.

Each year, volunteers help us identify new sites that need cleaning up. The addition of new sites to our program allows us to recover plastic pollution from more shorelines and collect location-specific data across the country. Anyone can suggest a new cleanup site, and with participants from coast-to-coast, we are able to reach shorelines across Canada. With the help of our volunteers and supporters, we added 237 sites to the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup map in 2021.

If you know of a site that could use a cleanup, you can suggest a site to our [cleanup map](#).

Highlights from new site locations added in 2021



2021 International Coastal Cleanup Day

Every year, International Coastal Cleanup Day brings people together from across the globe to their local shorelines to protect our waterways from litter and plastic pollution. Things looked a bit different as we continued to navigate the pandemic but that did not stop us from safely taking action. Beginning on September 18th, the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup celebrated International Coastal Cleanup Day for a whole week, allowing for more cleanups from coast-to-coast.

The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup brought together over **4,000 volunteers to collect 3,724 kilograms of litter throughout the week**. We thank all our volunteers for their amazing work, and hope they left with the deep sense of accomplishment they deserve. **Together they filled 677 trash bags and 237 recycling bags, preventing this litter from making its way to our lakes, rivers, and oceans.**

We hope you can join us next year!



International Coastal Cleanup Spotlight

Members of the U of T Trash Team completed 12 cleanups throughout the week!

“ Our team loves when we can get out into the community to increase waste literacy, and our Urban Litter Challenge is one of our favourite experiences each year. All drains lead to a river, lake and/or ocean—and cleanups like this are an accessible and impactful way to prevent litter in our watershed from reaching larger water bodies, all in just a few hours! ”

SUSAN DEBRECENI

PROGRAM LEAD OF VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO TRASH TEAM

Shoreline Spotlights



Melanie Kuzyk

**BIOLOGIST, RECONCILIATION AND PARTNERSHIPS
BRANCH, FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA (DFO)**

“Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff were excited to tackle shoreline cleanups across Canada this year and get teams together. Our branch chose the ecologically sensitive Sturgeon Banks Wildlife Management Area in Richmond, B.C. because it provides critical habitat for large populations of wintering waterbirds and all five species of Pacific salmon. We were able to experience this firsthand during the cleanup as we watched hundreds of snow geese overhead. Our team found it both rewarding and fun to contribute to the positive impacts of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup.”

Ilka Abbott

CONCERNED CITIZEN “I was feeling overwhelmed by all the news about environmental disasters but really wanted to do something. I chose to help keep our beaches clean of garbage and plastic debris because the oceans affect essentially everything on Earth in some way. It is something an individual could do and make even a small difference. So, a couple of years ago, my friends Jacquie, Nancy and I pledged to meet every Monday morning on a beach in Victoria. We inspire each other to maintain our commitment. We marvel at the junk we glean and encourage ourselves with thoughts of how much sea life we may have saved that week. Instead of thinking “somebody should do something,” we’re pleased that we can. Even during a pandemic!”



Minna Koskela-Wild

WATER WISE AND BLUE MAR 4 CHANGE “Having grown up in Northern Ontario, at the heart of the Upper Great Lakes, I was troubled to see plastics and microplastics in these incredible waterways. Through Water Wise, we linked a Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup to our World Water Day event: raising awareness of plastic and taking action for places we love. We reached out to 13 communities in our region, from Lake Superior to Huron, and invited everyone to join us. It was amazing to take part and contribute to the greater effort and data collection across our country.”

Ocean Wise Youth in Action

Ambassadors from Ocean Wise's YouthToSea and Ocean Bridge programs showed up in droves for Shoreline Cleanups in 2021. Here are the highlights!

566 volunteers participated in cleanups led by [Ocean Bridge](#), resulting in 634 kilograms of litter recovered from shorelines.

[YouthToSea](#) created the "Clean Coastal Eat Local" campaign, which offered restaurant gift cards from local sustainable seafood restaurants as an incentive to complete shoreline cleanups during the month of March. This campaign resulted in 45 cleanups in the Metro Vancouver Area.

Ambassadors from Ocean Wise's YouthToSea and Ocean Bridge programs completed 10 cleanups across Canada to celebrate International Cleanup Day and engaged more than 200 participants.

Ocean Bridge participant Aileen Duncan initiated "Trick or Trash", a campaign that engaged volunteers to dress up for Halloween during shoreline cleanups and encouraged ocean-friendly alternatives to the single-use treats and throw-away costumes.



Girl Guides and Scouts, Young Shoreline Heroes

Girl Guides and Scouts have been longstanding shoreline cleanup champions. More than 80,500 Guides and Scouts have collected more than 100,000 kilograms of litter from Canadian shorelines to date – and counting! As citizen scientist champions, they have collected litter data from over 1,300 locations across Canada. Despite the challenges we faced in 2021, both Guides and Scouts continued to show their dedication to keeping shorelines healthy.

2021 Highlights

- **Almost 2,000 Girl Guides collected 853 kilograms of litter from 152 kilometres of shoreline.**
- **Almost 1,000 Scouts collected 722 kilograms of litter from 97 kilometres of shoreline.**

We are inspired by the enormous impact these groups make each year!



“ Girl Guides has always been a place where girls explore what they care about, get involved in their communities, and connect with nature and the outdoors. Participating in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup helps girls experience all of this in a fun and tangible way, while also adding to a larger national impact. To know you’re making a difference is a special kind of pride, and we are so glad to be able to offer that feeling to girls through our partnership with the Shoreline Cleanup.”

LOUISE KENT
DIRECTOR, MEMBER EXPERIENCE, GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA

Our Donors and Supporters

Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup's work is made possible through the generous contributions of individual donors and corporate partners. We are deeply grateful for your trust and commitment and recognize your role in our achievements this past year. Thank you for your gift to our oceans, lakes, and rivers—and for believing in our mission.

Presenting Sponsors

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We also acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the province of British Columbia.

National Sponsor



The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, presented by Loblaw Companies Limited and the Coca-Cola Company, is one of the largest direct-action conservation programs in Canada. A conservation partnership by Ocean Wise and WWF-Canada, the Shoreline Cleanup aims to promote understanding of shoreline litter issues by engaging Canadians to rehabilitate shoreline areas through cleanups.

ShorelineCleanup.org



Ocean Wise is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring the global community to join forces to protect the health of our oceans. Specifically, we work to engage, inform and inspire people to experience curiosity, wonder, and a desire for an ever-deeper understanding about oceans, as well as a way to conserve them.

ocean.org



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WWF-Canada is committed to equitable and effective conservation actions that restore nature, reverse wildlife loss and fight climate change. We draw on scientific analysis and Indigenous guidance to ensure all our efforts connect to a single goal: a future where wildlife, nature and people thrive.

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