



2017 International Coastal Cleanup

Project Status

Project Year: 2017 **Status:** Completed

Category: Volunteer

Location: Elmer's Island, Grand Isle, LA

Project Partners: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LWDF), and Nicholls State University

Background and Problem Addressed:

Ocean trash or marine debris is a serious pollution problem that affects the health of people, wildlife, and local economies. Marine debris injures and kills marine life, interferes with navigation safety, and poses a threat to human health. Oceans and waterways are polluted with a wide variety of marine debris ranging from plastic water bottles, soda cans, and plastic bags to derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), marine debris is any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment. A majority of the trash and debris that covers our beaches comes from storm drains and sewers, as well as from shoreline and recreational activities such as fishing and beach going. Abandoned or discarded fishing gear is a problem because this trash can tangle, injure, maim, and drown marine wildlife and damage property.



Project Description:

On Saturday, September 16, 2017, in conjunction with the Ocean Conservancy's 31st annual International Coastal Cleanup Day, over 200 volunteers removed more than 4,000lbs. of debris from Elmer's Island in Grand Isle. The event cleaned up approximately 1,145 acres or 2.5 miles shoreline. The event's goal was to increase awareness of the problem of marine debris. BTNEP, LDWF and the Biological Sciences at Nicholls State University coordinated the event.

Volunteers collected, categorized, and weighed over two tons of debris items, enough to fill a 30-yard dumpster. The data from the cleanup was sent to the Ocean Conservancy for inclusion in an annual International Coastal Cleanup Day report. The most common debris item collected was plastic beverage bottles at 3,441 followed by 2,246 tiny plastic pieces (less than 2.5cm diameter). In total, volunteers removed 15,814 items of debris including an 80lb tar ball. Although some of the debris was from visitors of Elmer's beach not disposing of their trash properly, the majority comes from other places. For example, because the island is so close to the mouth of Bayou Lafourche, items could have washed down the bayou or come in from offshore.

BTNEP is honored to participate in the International Coastal Cleanup, which is the world's largest volunteer effort for our oceans and waterways. People from all over the world remove trash from the shores and document what they find. The data is compiled and published in an annual global report on marine debris by the Ocean Conservancy.

CCMP Action Items Addressed:

Citizen Monitoring Program (Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement #3)

