

TRASH SHOULDN'T SPLASH



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PUBLIC OUTREACH MATERIALS

Tabling at Public Events | Public Surveying | Finding Outreach Opportunities | Sample Letter to Town Officials | Writing to Local Newspapers & Media Outlets | Personal Plastics Use & Waste Inventory



Artwork created by Falmouth High School student Sara Cook



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TABLING AT PUBLIC EVENTS

Signage

Your table needs to look inviting and signage should clearly indicate your campaign name. Make sure that font on signage is big and that phrasing is concise enough that someone walking by at some distance can read and quickly identify your subject matter.

Staffing and Attracting Visitors

When possible, have multiple people staffing the table so that more than one person can be engaged at any given time. If children will be helping to staff the table, give them specific tasks, such as running activities for other children and giving short speeches to all visitors about why single-use plastic reduction is important to them. Leave more complex topics, such as legislation, best practices, and detailed scientific information, to informed adults or older teenagers.

Attracting visitors to your table is easiest when you smile and engage them with a question such as, "Would you like to learn more about *Trash Shouldn't Splash* and win a prize?". We created three-question "quizzes" with facts about ocean plastics on large posters, and gave every participant a stainless steel straw (even if they answered incorrectly). It is important to ensure that all people staffing the table are engaged (i.e., not staring at their phones) and eager to talk with visitors.

Activities

See K-12 Outreach Materials > Presentation and Activities

- Plastic Density Activity
- Rubber Band Activity
- Foraging for Food Among Plastic Activity

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Surveys

In order to better understand existing public opinions and behaviors around single-use (“disposable”) and reusable items, and opinions about restaurant practices, we asked people to take a short (5 minutes or less) survey using *Survey Monkey* on an electronic tablet. Participants were given a prize, such as a reusable water bottle or other reusable item, for participating.

Prizes and Giveaways

The original chapter of *Trash Shouldn't Splash* had funding to purchase printed giveaways for all table visitors, and prizes for people who engaged with staff through the poster quizzes or who participated in the electronic survey. Giveaways included logo stickers, business cards and postcards with *Trash Shouldn't Splash* student artwork. Prizes ranged from stainless steel straws for quiz-takers, to reusable items such as cutlery sets, stainless steel cups and takeout containers, produce bags and water bottles for survey-takers. *Trash Shouldn't Splash* logo stickers were attached to reusable items, when possible. Prizes can be expensive and aren't entirely necessary, but do help to draw and engage visitors.

“What We Carry” Exhibit

An exhibit on the table of reusable items a *Trash Shouldn't Splash* member regularly carries with them is an effective way to show that a shopping bag, takeout container, produce bags, bamboo utensil set, water bottle, and stainless steel straw can all be carried in a personal bag, backpack, or kept in the car. This normalizes the use of many different reusable items, and shows how easily one can reduce dependence on single-use items when on the go.

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TABLING CHECKLIST

Woods Hole Science Stroll – August 11, 2018

Tabling Supplies

- 2 Tables
- 3 Chairs
- 10' x 10' Tent
- Institutional Banner(s)
- 2 Easels with Binder Clips for Poster Quizzes
- Tablet and Internet Access for Online Survey

Materials to Print

- Partner Organization Posters / Materials
- Trash Shouldn't Splash* Poster Quizzes
- NOAA Marine Debris Program Handouts
- Trash Shouldn't Splash* Stickers
- Trash Shouldn't Splash* Business Cards
- Trash Shouldn't Splash* postcards with student artwork
- Trash Shouldn't Splash* Email Sign-Up Sheets
- "Take our Survey" Sheet, with URL to Online Survey
- Instructions for Volunteer Staff
- Restaurant Partners List

Show-and-tell Items & Activities

- Microplastics Samples
- Bird Bolus Containing Plastic Debris
- Reusable Item Samples (Shopping Bag, Produce Bag, Utensils, Straw, Takeout Container, Water Bottle, Coffee Mug)
- Tub of Beach Trash Collected at a Local Beach Clean-Up
- Skip the Straw Pledge Sheet

Giveaways and Prizes

- NOAA Marine Debris Program Bookmarks & "What is Marine Debris" Posters
- Stainless Steel Straws
- Bamboo Straws
- Bamboo Utensil Sets
- Stainless Steel Cups (add *Trash Shouldn't Splash* stickers)
- Reusable Water Bottles (add *Trash Shouldn't Splash* stickers)
- Stainless Steel Takeout Containers (add *Trash Shouldn't Splash* stickers)
- Cotton Mesh Produce Bags
- Bamboo Toothbrushes with Boar Hair Bristles



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PUBLIC SURVEYING

To better understand the existing attitudes, beliefs, habits and behaviors of people in our community around single-use and reusable items, we developed a short (less than 5 minutes) electronic survey. We conducted the survey using *Survey Monkey* on an electronic tablet connected to the internet. We surveyed attendees of public outreach events (Woods Hole Science Stroll, August 2017 and 2018), and SEA Semester students surveyed passersby outside public places such as the ferry terminal in Woods Hole. At the public events, we offered a prize (reusable item – see *Tabling at Public Events*) to encourage people to take the survey. SEA Semester students simply asked passersby if they could spare 5 minutes to take a student survey, without offering a prize.

The survey questions are listed below. A direct link to the *Survey Monkey* survey is available by emailing trashshouldntsplash@gmail.com.

1. I carry the following reusable items with me:

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Shopping bag	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water bottle and/or coffee mug	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking straw	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utensils (Fork/Knife/Spoon)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. If you use any of the above reusable items, how important is each of the following?

	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Less important	Not important
Doing what my friends & family do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using less or preventing waste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Saving money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

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3. How often do you use a straw to drink beverages?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

4. How important are the following in your decision to use a straw?

	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Less important	Not important
By using a straw I can bypass the ice in my drink, or avoid ice falling out when tipping the glass	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer using a straw for drinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think straws are more sanitary for drinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was given one with my order	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

5. Restaurants should only provide a straw to a customer upon request.

- Totally agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Totally disagree

6. Restaurants should reduce their use of single-use ("disposable") plastic items.

- Totally agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Totally disagree

7. I would make an effort to carry a reusable water bottle if there were free water refilling stations in Falmouth.

- Totally agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Totally disagree

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8. How often do you recycle at home?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

9. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

10. What is your age?

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

11. What is the highest level of education you completed?

- Some high school, but no diploma
- High school diploma (or GED)
- Some college, but no degree
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Graduate-level degree

12. In which U.S. state do you reside?

13. If you live in Massachusetts, do you live in Falmouth (including Woods Hole)?

- Yes, year-round
- Yes, seasonal
- No

14. If you would like more information about our "Trash Shouldn't Splash" campaign, please enter your email address:



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FINDING OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

Communication efforts are best when designed for the target audience, whether K-12 students, college students, restaurants, or community organizations. Below are suggestions for ways you can reach those local audiences.

K-12 Students

- Classroom visits, arranged through school administrators or directly with teachers
- School environmental clubs
- Environmentally focused summer camps
- Girl and Boy Scout troop meetings
- Religious groups
- Kid-friendly community events

College Students

- Environmental clubs
- Campus sustainability teams
- Scholarship groups
- Outdoor/outing clubs
- Visits to classes with an environmental science curriculum
- Environmental off-campus study programs
- Involvement fairs
- Service fairs
- Signage for dorm buildings or student off-campus housing units

On-campus candidates to join the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* Restaurant Partnership Program:

- Cafeteria/campus food services
- On-campus restaurants and food trucks
- Campus sports stadiums and other venues (e.g., music, theater) that offer concessions

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Restaurants

When identifying potential businesses to approach about the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* Restaurant Partnership Program, it is helpful to have an initial “hook”, or reason that a business might be particularly interested in working with you. For example:

- restaurants that have already demonstrated an interest in reducing single-use plastics, such as by replacing traditional plastic items with compostable plastic, paper or wood alternatives, or businesses already only providing straws only upon request;
- restaurants whose owners or management with whom you already have a relationship or a personal connection;
- restaurants that you patronize often;
- restaurants that are local chains, in which there is potential for change in more than one restaurant location;
- restaurants located on a waterfront;
- seafood restaurants;
- restaurants drawing patrons that might be especially interested in reducing ocean plastics, such as those in coastal towns or in college/university towns.

Also, targeting businesses that are clustered in some way can encourage businesses that might initially be slow to adopt the program to sign on when they see their neighboring businesses become partners. For example, start by focusing on:

- all businesses in a small town or a small business district;
- all members of a local restaurant or business association;
- a cluster of restaurants in close proximity to one another, such as those that share a parking lot.

Other Venues for Outreach

- Local community organizations that are concerned about related environmental problems such as roadside litter, water quality, etc.
- Zoos and aquariums
- Marine science research and/or education centers
- State or local parks
- Your business or place of work, including vendors that provide catering services



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SAMPLE LETTER TO TOWN OFFICIALS

When drafting a letter, it may be helpful to refer to *A Guide to Writing Letters to Public Officials: Contributing to Important Decisions Affecting You and Others* by Tom Seekins and Stephen B. Fawcett of The Research & Training Center on Independent Living. This helpful guide gives a general format to writing effective letters to local officials.

A sample letter follows, based on the principles in the above guide. Note that names, phone number and address are fictional.

Source: Seekins, T., & Fawcett, S. (n.d.). A guide to writing letters to public officials: Contributing to important decisions affecting you and others. Lawrence, KS: Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas.

Honorable Selectman Patrick Adams:

I am a concerned citizen working on the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* campaign in the Woods Hole village of Falmouth. *Trash Shouldn't Splash* is an initiative focused on reducing the use of single-use items, particularly those made of plastic, to reduce the amount of waste on land and in the oceans, which scientific data indicates is harmful to marine life and potentially human health. In addition, the coastal area of Falmouth is particularly vulnerable to the impacts that plastic marine debris can have on tourism. I am concerned about the state of the municipal trash bins in Woods Hole village. They are poorly labeled and recycling bins are not consistently paired with each trash bin. I am thrilled to hear that the town is considering implementing recycling and compost bins with each trash bin in Woods Hole, and I am completely in support of this allocation of funds.

The new three-bin system would allow people to easily recycle their plastic waste, which is incredibly important in preventing marine debris on the beaches and in the waterways of coastal Woods Hole. I believe that as a community with many scientists, Woods Hole and the greater Falmouth area should set an example for sustainable waste management, which should include recycling and composting. In fact, many of the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* restaurant partners in Woods Hole have invested resources to replace traditional plastic items with compostable plastic alternatives. However, their efforts will only be realized if there are bins to collect these items for commercial composting.

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I saw you speak at the unveiling of the new water bottle filling stations and I think that in supporting this funding allocation, you show the residents of Falmouth that you're willing to follow through with your commitment to reducing Falmouth's plastic footprint. I would be happy to talk about this endeavor further with you. Please reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss.

Sincerely,

Laura H. Smith

Laura H. Smith
Trash Shouldn't Splash Representative
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WRITING TO LOCAL NEWSPAPERS & MEDIA OUTLETS

Below is the text of an Op-Ed written by the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* team that was submitted to the *Falmouth Enterprise*, a local newspaper. This is one model of many styles of media writing that can be used to communicate key messages about your campaign to a broader public audience. Our goals in writing the article were to be informative and understandable to a broad audience, and to employ a positive tone focusing on solutions, in the style of “solutions journalism” (www.solutionsjournalism.org).

To ensure that the letter represents *Trash Shouldn't Splash* accurately and positively, it is important to:

- Understand and follow guidelines for submission provided by the media outlet;
- Clearly and concisely communicate the goals of the organization;
- Include information about upcoming events that readers might be interested in attending, such as tabling events, public lectures, panel discussions or beach cleanups;
- Include contact information for readers who would like more information or who wish to get involved;
- Proofread carefully before submission.

Graduate from Plastics

The forces working against ocean plastic pollution just got stronger. On a New England fall day, two middle-school girls went door-to-door to restaurants and stores with a product to sell. It wasn't Girl Scout cookies or another fundraising sale. It was something far bigger and, arguably, more satisfying. They were selling an idea: a reduction in single-use plastics.

The girls formed a local Skip-the-Straw organization associated with Falmouth Water Stewards, and later collaborated with Sea Education Association (SEA) to establish the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* campaign, which promotes a reduction in single-use items, especially those made of plastics, to decrease waste on land and in the oceans. SEA Semester undergraduates have conducted *Trash Shouldn't Splash* surveys in Falmouth to understand consumers' habits and attitudes about single-use (“disposable”) plastic items, such as bags, straws and water bottles. More than 60% of respondents indicated they use straws simply because they were given one with their drink order, and that they would happily do without.

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As early as the late 1970s, SEA Semester students went to sea with plans to study marine life, towed their plankton nets, and were surprised to find not just plankton, but also tiny plastic bits smaller than your fingernail. These “microplastics” (< 5 mm in size, mainly resulting from larger plastic debris breaking apart but not biodegrading) continue to show up year after year in SEA’s plankton net tows in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Microplastics are small enough to be eaten by a wide range of marine animals, from blue whales to tiny zooplankton, with health consequences that are not yet fully understood, but which may include internal injury, starvation, and effects on growth and reproduction. Now, when SEA Semester students go to sea and observe, first-hand, this floating plastic debris, they want to know how to stop this pervasive ocean pollutant.

Plastics are a necessary part of our everyday lives and we want them in useful applications, such as electronics and health care. But we discard many items, especially those associated with food and drinks, after only one use. When SEA Semester students recorded personal waste inventories, they were sobered by the volumes of unnecessary plastic waste generated as a byproduct of their simple – and changeable – personal daily habits.

In Falmouth, keeping our coastline and town clean is an expressed priority of our town government, local organizations, schools, businesses, and residents. For businesses, integrating environmental stewardship with the economic bottom line isn’t just possible - the two are interdependent. In the *Trash Shouldn’t Splash* survey, 96% of respondents said restaurants should use fewer single-use plastics, suggesting customers might prefer restaurants that offer straws only upon request and that provide reusable utensils and dishes. Armed with these data, *Trash Shouldn’t Splash* visited Woods Hole restaurants to offer support in finding ocean-friendly alternatives to single-use plastic items that are also business friendly. For example, although paper straws are more expensive than plastic straws, a restaurant might save money by offering them only when requested by a customer.

Many organizations and communities are already working together against the tide of trash threatening our neighborhoods, our ocean, and potentially our health. At Sail Martha’s Vineyard regattas, children organize hundreds of diners to place waste into categorized bins of compost, recyclables, and dishes to be washed and reused. One organizer said, “people listen to kids when they might ignore adults saying the same thing.”

Kids in Falmouth care about plastic pollution too, carrying trash bags to and from school or the beach to collect plentiful roadside debris. And more than 120 Falmouth K-12 students responded to the *Trash Shouldn’t Splash* “Call for Ocean Art” to showcase the ocean plastics problem and to encourage waste-reducing habits, such as skipping single-use dining ware and carrying reusable water bottles. Water refill stations have been installed in a number of Falmouth schools, and the first two outdoor water refill stations were recently installed in Peg Noonan Park and at the Falmouth Heights ballpark by Falmouth Water Stewards, with support from Falmouth Road Race, Inc. and the Town of Falmouth.

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Establishing new habits to reduce plastic waste across all of society may be hard work, but when it can be as simple as skipping a straw or carrying a reusable water bottle, being the change you want to see in the world may not be so tough.

Contributed by members of Trash Shouldn't Splash (trashshouldntsplash.org)



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PERSONAL PLASTICS USE & WASTE INVENTORY

A One-Day Activity for Older Students and Adults

This activity is intended to draw your attention to the plastic items you use and the waste that you generate on a typical day, and asks you to reflect upon your behaviors and habits.

I: Record a Personal Plastics & Waste Inventory

For one full day, starting from the moment you wake up to the moment you fall asleep, record every item that you interact with (touch, or use in some way) that is made, in whole or in part, of plastic. During the same time, record every item that you dispose of (in compost, recycling, or trash), including the item's material. Do this to the best of your ability using the included, two-sided form. You may need to print several pages of the form in order to log all items.

You may wish to complete the activity twice – once during the work/school week, and once on the weekend.

II: Personal Reflection

The following questions are intended to guide a personal reflection upon this exercise, including your daily behaviors and habits.

1. What were your reactions while filling out the plastics and waste inventories?
2. What are your reactions upon looking at the final list of inventoried plastic items and waste items?
3. How much of the plastic you interacted with was waste? How much of your waste was made of plastic?
4. If you were to reduce your personal usage of plastics, what actions might you take? Would you target particular items or products? Are there old habits you would break, or new habits you would set?
5. If you were to reduce your personal generation of waste, what actions might you take? Would you target particular items or products? Are there old habits you would break, or new habits you would set?
6. What are the available options for disposing of your waste in your community (e.g., compost, recycling, container deposit return, trash)? Are you fully utilizing these services?

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7. Do you think your behavior changed while doing this activity? If so, how?

Adaptation for Younger Students

This activity could be adapted for use by younger students by making the following changes:

- Shorten the activity by conducting during the school day, and/or assign for a shorter time to do at home.
- Conduct a discussion-based reflection in small groups.
- Focus on changes that can be made in the classroom, such as using only the materials that you need and learning what belongs in classroom recycling and waste bins.
- Focus on behaviors and changes that can be made in the school cafeteria, such as taking only what you need (e.g., food, napkins, utensils) and learning what belongs in compost, recycling and waste bins.
- Discuss changes that might help reduce single-use plastics and waste in school, such as replacing plastic straws with paper straws, or bringing a reusable water bottle to school and filling it at water fountains/water stations.

This activity is adapted from an original version developed and generously shared by Dr. Heather Heenan.

