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Sea Coast Echo



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Mississippi Ranks 6th in U.S. for Participation in 2003 Coastal Cleanup

According to results released recently by The Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C., of the 50 U.S. states and territories taking part in the 2003 International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest single-day cleanup effort on behalf of the marine environment—Mississippi was in the top six for number of volunteers participating in the annual event. Officially held on Sept. 20, 2003, the 18th annual International Coastal Cleanup involved more than 450,000 volunteers from more than 90 countries who collected 7.55 million pounds of marine debris. In Mississippi, 4,530 volunteers removed 73,143 pounds of marine debris from 233 miles of beaches and waterways along the Mississippi Gulf Coast during the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.

“Mississippi’s excellent ranking for most volunteer participation in the Coastal Cleanup is no surprise,” Gov. Haley Barbour said. “Mississippians are some of the most generous people in our nation, whether it be through volunteering their time or their talents, we’ve got everyone beat when it comes to lending a helping hand.”

Recreational Activities

Overall, shoreline and recreational activities like sports, picnics, games and going to the beach caused 51 percent of the debris found in Mississippi during the 2003 International Coastal Cleanup. Litter washed from streets and parking lots into storm drains also falls under these activities. Shoreline and recreational activities accounted for 56 percent of all the debris found worldwide.

In 2003, the 10 most frequently found items—Mississippi’s “Top Ten” debris items list—comprised 82 percent of all the debris collected in Mississippi. Of those 10, the top three items—cigarettes, food wrappers and caps and lids—account for nearly half of all debris. Cigarettes were the most commonly found debris item, comprising more than one quarter of the 125,475 debris items collected in the cleanup.

Debris from cigarettes, cigars and their wrappers made up 39 percent of the items collected in Mississippi. Worldwide, smoking-related activities accounted for 34 percent of all the debris collected.

Animal Entanglements

It is estimated that worldwide more than a million birds and 100,000 marine mammals and sea turtles die each year from ingesting or getting entangled in marine debris. Sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, one of their favorite foods. Items from ocean/waterway

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activities, such as fishing line, fish traps, nets and lures are the most common types of entangling debris and don't always make it to land. Instead, they can remain in the water, where they pose a continual threat to wildlife and humans. Volunteers discovered 237 entangled animals worldwide during the 2003 International Coastal Cleanup. Volunteers in Mississippi reported 19 animal entanglements, including birds, crab and fish caught in fishing line, rope and plastic bags.

Trash Travels

Most of the debris found during the 2003 Cleanup in Mississippi and worldwide came from land-based sources such as beach picnics and general littering.

For more information or to volunteer for the 2004 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup to be held Sept. 18, please call 1-877-9 CLEAN 5.

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