



"Por un ambiente digno"



Summary of Results First National Clean Up September, Costa Rica 2009

Background

Costa Rican homes generate 11,000 tons of solid waste each day. Roughly one-third of this waste is untreated and winds up in streets, empty lots, gutters and other public areas. Rain waters eventually take the waste to the rivers, which bring it to the beaches and into the ocean. In urban areas the situation is more exaggerated, with each person producing more than a kilo (2.2 pounds) of solid waste each day, most of which is not treated.

Inadequate treatment of solid waste is one of the main environmental problems facing the country today. This problem directly affects human health, coastal and river eco-systems, not to mention the aesthetic beauty of the landscape, and finally, the country's economy.

Main goal

Our main goal is to carry out a National Clean Up as part of the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Clean Up program. In addition to removing tons of solid waste from the coasts, the activity is also designed to raise awareness among the general population, as well as state authorities and businesses about the need to re-think and change the culture around solid waste.

Specific objectives

1. To contribute to the clean up of urban and rural communities in order to decrease the amount of solid waste carried to the coasts.
2. To contribute towards the decrease in transmittable diseases such as dengue and malaria, among others, which have affected the health of the country's population.
3. To widely promote a reduction in the generation of solid waste starting at the source. This is accomplished by diffusing the message of reduce, reuse, recycle (the 3-Rs), by highlighting the importance of the issue of solid waste in general, and by encouraging responsible behavior by all who generate waste.
4. To support local, regional, and national initiatives to reuse and recycle material and encourage participation in the annual national clean up.

Summary of results

The First National Clean Up (Sept. 10 - Oct. 4, 2009) was a great success and organized volunteers to work throughout the country in 46 different locations including parks, communities, beaches and rivers. The more than 25 tons of solid waste collected was then sorted and brought to centers for proper handling.

Through this project and other activities of Terra Nostra (Asociación Terra Nostra, ATN) the negative effects of solid waste on human health and the environment have been brought to light. In addition, collecting and properly disposing this vast quantity of waste has lessened the burden on the ocean and coastal ecosystems. As we have discovered through our work, the inadequate treatment and facilities results in much of the trash in the country's dumps being dragged to the coasts by strong tropical rains and river currents.

This first massive national clean up in Costa Rica resulted in the largest collection of solid waste within a short time-frame (one month). Its success was made possible by the support and participation of the municipal governments, community organizations, local and national businesses and thousands of individual volunteers. Another important component of the project was the official recognition given to it by the Ministry of Health (MAP), The Ministry of Environment, Electricity and Transportation (MINUET), and the government initiative Peace with Nature.

The National Clean-up in Numbers

Total solid waste collected: 25.745 metric tons

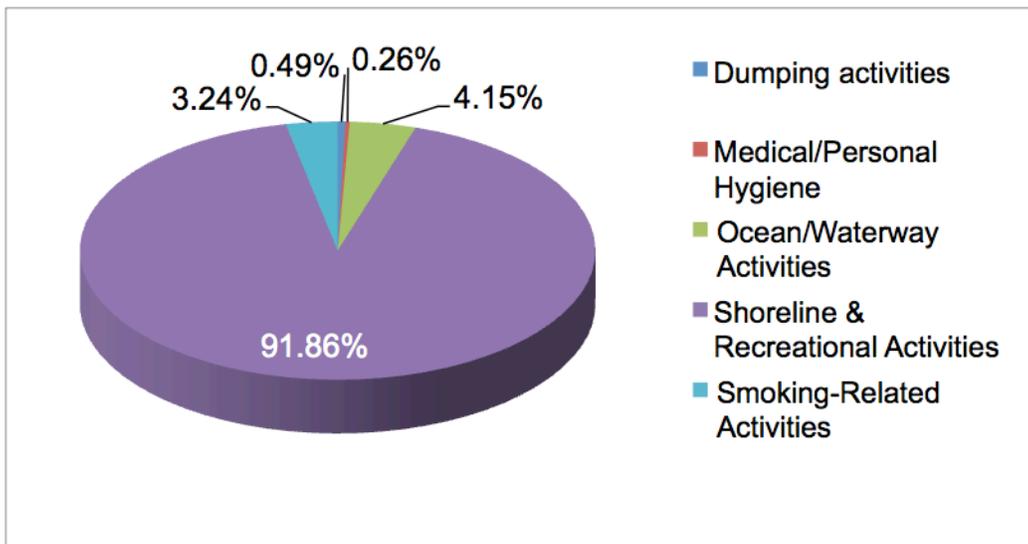
Recyclable waste	Non-recyclable waste
6 868 Kg. (27%)	18 877 Kg. (73%)

Number of sites cleaned	Number of volunteers	Plastics (PET Y HOPE)	Glass (Kg.)	Cardboard (Kg.)	Paper (Kg.)	Aluminum (Kg.)	Non-recyclable waste (Kg.)
46	2574	3124.6	2217.5	572	180	774	18877

Top Ten marine debris items

	Item	Total Items	% of total
1	Beverage Bottles (plastic) 2 liters or less	38861	39.86%
2	Caps, lids	25019	25.66%
3	Clothing, Shoes	7980	8.19%
4	Straws, Stirrers	5506	5.65%
5	Beverages cans	3370	3.46%
6	Plastic Bags	2712	2.78%
7	Cigarettes/Cigarette Filters	2236	2.29%
8	Cups, Plates, Forks, Knives, Spoons	1911	1.96%
9	Glass Beverage Bottles	1724	1.77%
10	Food Wrappers/Containers	1689	1.73%
Top Ten Total		91008	93.35%
Total items		97490	100.00%

Sources of marine debris



Photographs

Photos of the volunteers in different parts of the country action can be found by following this link:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/terranostra/sets/72157622551769089/>

Recommendations

- Strengthen and broaden public and private alliances to increase reduction, recycling, and reutilization of solid waste throughout the country.
- Increase the funds available for research into the sources of solid waste and its impact on public health and ecosystem health.
- Increase and improve education about solid waste management with special emphasis on solid waste reduction.
- Provide a well-designed system for collecting recyclables from homes and businesses.
- Promote the development and use of clean technologies and improve the way waste is managed.
- Support the inclusion of appropriate ocean management in climate change initiatives.
- Motivate communities to organize clean ups on an on-going basis.
- Provide follow-up to and continue to hold the annual National Clean Up
- Make data from the national clean up of waterways and beaches available to the Ocean Conservancy, thereby aiding in the management of solid waste on a national and international level.