

# “A Plastic Ocean” Toolkit

## Objectives:

- To create greater dialogue and connection with coworkers around the principles of living sustainably with the oceans.
- To create more learning and action around the issue of single use plastics and their impact on our oceans.
- To identify strategies and build commitment for reducing single-use plastics (i.e. plastic bags, plastic water bottles, plastic straws, plastic utensils, etc.) at home and at work.



**Note! This is a great toolkit to use on or around World Oceans Day on June 8<sup>th</sup>.**

## Background:

Every year, 8 million tonnes of plastics finds its way into our oceans<sup>1</sup>. Increasingly, in our culture, single-use plastics (plastic bags, plastic water bottles, plastic utensils, take-out plastic food containers, straws, plastic packaging, etc.) have become the norm. In the last 10 years we have created more plastics than we did in the whole of last century<sup>1</sup>!



Plastics in the ocean have a devastating impact on marine life, such as marine mammals, fish, seals, birds, etc., as they consume it and as they become entangled in it. Inevitably, as plastics enter the marine food web, they also end up on our plates in the fish we eat. The health implications of consuming plastics are numerous<sup>2</sup>.

Fortunately, there is a lot we can do in our lives, at home and at work, to significantly reduce the amount of plastics we use. Check out the activities below for some ideas!

1. Plastic Population Coalition: <http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/>
2. A Plastic Ocean: <http://www.plasticoceans.org/>

## What can you do?

You can take action to reduce plastic pollution at home, at work, and in your community.

### At home:

Consider how you can choose to 'quit plastics' in small and big ways.

For a list of plastics you can quit right now, check out this page:

<http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/get-started-living-plastic-free>

### At Work:

1. **Short on time:** Email out to co-workers.

If you don't have time to organize an event but want to connect co-workers with the issue of plastics in the oceans, consider sending an email out to co-workers that highlights the issue. You can use the example email in the *World Oceans Day Toolkit*, include some of the information about plastics highlighted above and include the link above for a list of plastics you can quit right now.

2. **More flexible with time:** Discussion Tool.

#### Step 1:

Organize a time for your team to spend about 45 minutes together to introduce the issue of plastics in our oceans. It might be that you have a special meeting or do a lunch n' learn. You can use the email example in the *World's Oceans Day Toolkit* to inspire interest in your event among your co-workers.

#### Step 2:

Prior to your time together, check that you can access the three following videos:

- A look at one of how ocean plastic pollution travels the globe and one community's response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGBpHYLNtRA>
- A look at one person's journey as he discovers the life of the plastic bag and beyond: <https://vimeo.com/5645718>
- An inspiring story of the potential to clean up plastics in the ocean, using breakthrough technology and determination: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uguRuClldTw>

### Step 3:

Start the session off by introducing the topic of the day, how you'll be spending the next 30-45 minutes, and setting the context. Use the following notes, as a guide, or write your own:

- Today we'll be talking about the issue of plastics in the ocean and what we can do to address this issue in our everyday lives, in our workplace and in our communities.
- As you know, I'm part of the Green+Leaders Program that is helping to green our workplaces.
- An important part of this work is creating connections with the people I work with and inspiring a culture of openness and dialogue about the issues.
- These video encourages us to take some time to reflect on our own relationship with the oceans and with the impact that we have on this critical part of our Earth's life support system.

### Step 3:

Watch the movies (as many as you have time for), followed by a 5-10 minute reflective conversation as one large group, or as smaller groups, depending on the number of people.

Here are some questions to help guide the conversation:

- What stood out for you in these movies?
- How are you feeling after watching? (Hopeful, pessimistic, worried, overwhelmed, motivated, others?)
- How do you currently approach the use of single use plastics (plastic bags, plastic water bottles, plastic single-use food containers, straws, etc.), in your life?
- What are you inspired to do as a result of these movies?
- What could you do as part of a group (at work or in your community)?
- What impact might this have?
- What are your next steps?

### Step 4:

Introduce the idea of a special project where, either individually, or as a group, you consider possible areas for plastic waste reduction in the workplace. Here are some questions to guide your thinking:

- Consider the plastic waste produced in your department/unit, thinking about all areas, including the medical unit and/or office space, and also the lunchroom, staff lounge, staff bathroom, etc.
- Is there any opportunity to reduce the waste or replace one-time use items?

### Step 5:

If you've identified an opportunity where waste can be reduced or eliminated, you can use these questions to guide your actions.

- Where is the item in question located? When and where is it most commonly used?
- Can you quantify the waste produced, i.e. there is *this number* of *this item* used every day/week/month?
- What stakeholders are involved, i.e. who uses it? And, who purchases it?
- What opportunities do you see to reduce the need for this item, to replace it or to recycle it more effectively?

Please share the outcome of this conversation with our Zero Waste and Toxicity lead, Sonja Janousek (Sonja.janousek@fraserhealth.ca).

\*You can show your co-workers the following example of what the MDRD manager at VGH is doing to reduce waste, an inspiring story! *A Greencare Hero*: <https://bcgreencare.ca/vgh-mdrd-greencare-hero>

### Step 6:

Check in with the group to see if anyone has any final thoughts.

### Step 7:

Send a follow-up email to the group thanking them for their participation, sharing all the relevant resources that were used, i.e. links to the videos, link to the plastics you can quit right now, and finally as a follow-up to organize a time to address the special projects idea, if there was any interest.

Note: want to include prizes at your event? The Green+Leaders program has re-usable 'sandwich' bags to give out that can be an alternative to plastic bags.

### In your Community:

#### Step 1:

Take your family/co-workers outside and join a [Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup](#) in your area!

Get your family, or co-workers, or both together, to clean up our beaches! Visit the [Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up](#) website to see if there is a local group already organized that you could join OR organize a clean-up yourself! To inspire interest, email out a link to [this video](#), which outlines the incredible list of things that can be collected in just one clean-up of a small group of people.

Consider what your municipality can do to reduce single-use plastic bags and water bottles.

This toolkit is a great place to start. [http://public.surfrider.org/RAP/RAP\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://public.surfrider.org/RAP/RAP_Toolkit.pdf)

**Learn More:**

<http://www.plasticoceans.org/>

<http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/>

<https://www.surfrider.org/chapters>

<http://www.worldoceansday.org/>

Bag It Movie Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/5645718>

[http://www.bagitmovie.com/about\\_issues.html](http://www.bagitmovie.com/about_issues.html)

For more info on the impacts of plastics on the oceans, check out this page:

[http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/ocean,](http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/ocean)