Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation

York River Watershed Grants Program – Project Summary Report

Provided to the York River Stewardship Committee

October 31, 2026

Project name: Marine Debris Education and Cleanup

Project summary:
From September 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026, Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation expanded education programs and cleanups in the York River Watershed, with the goal of increasing stewardship of river and water resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Ten educational programs were conducted in York, Kittery, and Eliot. These programs reached nearly 400 participants. Monthly cleanups were started at Short Sands Beach and York Harbor Beach and we collaborated with York Golf and Tennis Club to do cleanups along the York River. During the project, 15 cleanups were conducted, resulting in the removal of 286 pounds of litter. In addition, fishing line recycling bins were installed at two York town docks.

Project activities and outcomes:

Below are the contracted tasks, and progress on each:

1. Provide approximately 7 educational programs to local schools or local community groups with connections to the York River watershed. Programs will include presentations and hands-on activities that demonstrate the importance of marine life and related ecosystems, the impacts of marine debris, and actionable strategies for protecting local watershed and marine resources.

Ten programs were conducted, as shown in the table below. They reached more than 400 people:

Date	Program	Location	Number of participants
10/14/2025	Ladder the Inflatable Whale	York Middle School,	126 5th graders
1/21/2026	Ladder the Inflatable Whale	York PAL Program	55 students
1/29/2026	Gulf of Maine Whales	Rice Public Library	31 adults
2/18/2026	Travels of Ocean Trash	York Public Library	37 adults

Date	Program	Location	Number of participants
2/19/2026	Marine debris art	Rice Public Library	2 adults, 10 teens
3/11/2026	Microplastics Presentation	York Public Library	40 adults
3/19/2026	Travels of Ocean Trash	Rice Public Library	14 adults
6/30/2026	Gulf of Maine Whales	York Public Library	25 adults
8/11/2026	Ladder the inflatable whale	Rice Public Library	25 adults, 30 children
9/19/2026	Marine Debris Art	William Fogg Library	4 adults, 4 children

2. Organize and coordinate volunteers to implement a local beach and watershed cleanup program that involves monthly cleanup support, debris tracking, and engaging citizens to identify local areas in need of cleanup. Approximately 10 hours a month of cleanup support/coordination will be provided for York beaches and locations in the York River watershed.

We organized 17 beach cleanups across three locations in York: Short Sands Beach, York Harbor Beach, and the York Golf & Tennis Club shoreline. We began a monthly public cleanup at Short Sands Beach, and a York resident adopted York Harbor Beach for monthly cleanups. We also did two cleanups along the York River with the York Golf and Tennis Club. Together, these cleanups engaged 67 participants and resulted in the removal of over 300 pounds of marine debris, totaling 5,590 individual pieces of trash.

Site	Number of Cleanups	Weight (lbs)	Pieces of Debris	Volunteers
Short Sands Beach	9	245.3	5,074	51
York Harbor Beach	6	27.05	246	9
York Golf and Tennis Club	2	29	270	7

Marine debris collected during Blue Ocean Society cleanups is documented using our data cards (attached). We collect information on the types and quantities of debris found at different cleanup locations to support educational programs, develop targeted pollution-prevention initiatives, and inform resource managers and litter policies.

We also installed two fishing line recycling bins at York Town Docks 1 and 2. Bin installation was coordinated by volunteer Stephanie Burrows, who worked with other BOS volunteers to empty the bins, tabulate the debris and send collected line to Berkeley Pure Fishing. Over 50 pounds of fishing line and spools were collected from all of our fishing line recycling bins this summer, but we do not have the specific totals yet for the York Town Dock bins.

3. Coordinate with the York River Stewardship Committee and other local entities, as appropriate, to identify sites, volunteers, and education programming opportunities and to promote activities and volunteer opportunities.

We worked with YRSC and other entities to identify cleanup sites, recruit volunteers and make connections for educational programs.

BLUE OCEAN SOCIETY FOR MARINE CONSERVATION

COASTAL DEBRIS MONITORING PROJECT

DATA CARD

Please answer the following questions and record your data on the back of this card. Return the card to your cleanup director. Completed cards can be dropped off or mailed to:
Blue Ocean Society, 400 Little Harbor Road #1103 Portsmouth, NH 03801

Name:_____

Group/Affiliation:_____

Cleanup Date: _____/_____/_____ Cleanup start time: _____AM/PM

Cleanup Site:_____ Cleanup end time: _____AM/PM

Current weather: _____

Notable weather in previous week (storms, winds, etc.):_____

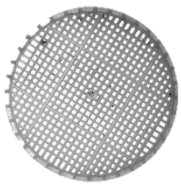
Other remarks: _____

Dead/Live/Entangled Animals: _____

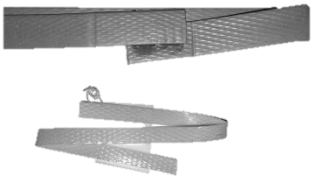
Instructions:

- Pick up all the trash and record all items you find. Keep track of the items by making tick marks (~~IIII~~ II). Only numbers are useful, avoid using words or check marks.
- If you can tell where a fragment is from, record it as that item (e.g., Record a foam piece clearly from a cup, as a cup.)
- **Lobster traps and buoys are the private property of the fisherman and we are NOT allowed to remove them. Please tally these items, although you are not removing them.**
- Don't pick up dead animals or anything hazardous. Bring these items to the attention of a BOS staff member.
- If you see a marine mammal (e.g. a seal), tell BOS staff or call the local marine mammal hotline (1-800-532-9551 in ME, 603-997-9448 in NH).

Field Guide to (tricky) Marine Debris:



Hooksett disk: Plastic round filter with grid. About 1.5 inches diameter.



Strapping band: Top: closed- band still circular Bottom: open- band has been cut



Zip-tie/cable tie: Plastic fastener; may be open or closed





Latex vs. Mylar balloons: Latex: rubber material Mylar: foil material



Lobster bands: Thick, small rubber bands

SUMMARY	
Total Volunteers at Cleanup:	**Total Trash:**
_____ Adults	Total # Full Bags of Trash: _____
_____ Children (under 12)	Total lbs. of Trash: _____
_____ Total Volunteers	

Items Collected

	Item:	Tally: Example: 𝍸 II = 7 *(Avoid words, only numbers are useful!)*	Total:
PLASTIC	Bag (Grocery)		
	Bag (Trash)		
	Bag (zip-lock, produce, other)		
	Beverage bottles		
	Bottle caps		
	Film (thin/flexible e.g. straw wrapper)		
	Fishing line		
	Food containers		
	Hooksett disks		
	Nets (incl. bait bags)		
	Strapping bands	Open: ☐ Closed:	
	Straws		
	Wrappers		
	Zip ties (cable ties)		
	Non-beverage containers/bottles		
	Other unk. plastic (larger than 10 cm)		
METAL	Beverage cans		
	Bottle caps		
	Other metal		
GLASS	Beverage bottles		
	Other glass		
FOAM	Cups		
	Floats/Buoys		
	Food containers		
	Packaging material		
MIXED MATERIALS	Balloons	Mylar: ☐ Latex:	
	Cigarette butts/filters		
	Dog Poop	Bagged: ☐ Un-bagged:	
	Lobster bands		
	Personal hygiene items		
	Rope (larger than 1 meter/yard)		
	Rope scraps (smaller than 1 m/yd.)		
	Syringes		
	Traps/pot pieces (do NOT remove)		

OTHER *(Add items not on the list)*

Item:	Tally:	Total:	Item:	Tally:	Total:

FRAGMENTS

	Smaller than 5 mm	5 mm – 2.5 cm	2.5 cm – 10 cm
Foam Pieces			
Glass Pieces			
Plastic Pieces			

