



2023 Environmental Sustainability Report

Prepared By :

Ashley Morrison

ashley.morrison@gbf.org

www.georgianbayforever.org

2023

About Us

Georgian Bay is a globally unique ecosystem and is classified as a UNESCO world biosphere. With more than 30,000 islands and 2,000 kilometers of shorelines it is the largest freshwater archipelago in the world. This region is an important transitional ecosystem that contains a wide diversity of habitats from rocky shorelines to coastal wetlands, and sandy beaches. These shorelines support an incredible array of organisms; more species of reptiles and amphibians live here than anywhere else in Canada, including species at risk such as the Blanding's Turtle and the Piping Plover.



Georgian Bay Forever is a registered Canadian charity founded in 1995 with the mission of preserving the Georgian Bay aquatic ecosystem and promoting environmental protection. GBF's commitment to safeguarding the Georgian Bay ecosystem is rooted in our dedication to scientific research, action, and education to address environmental issues.

This report details the significant strides made by Georgian Bay Forever in 2023 through our generously funded shoreline program, while also outlining our plans for 2024.

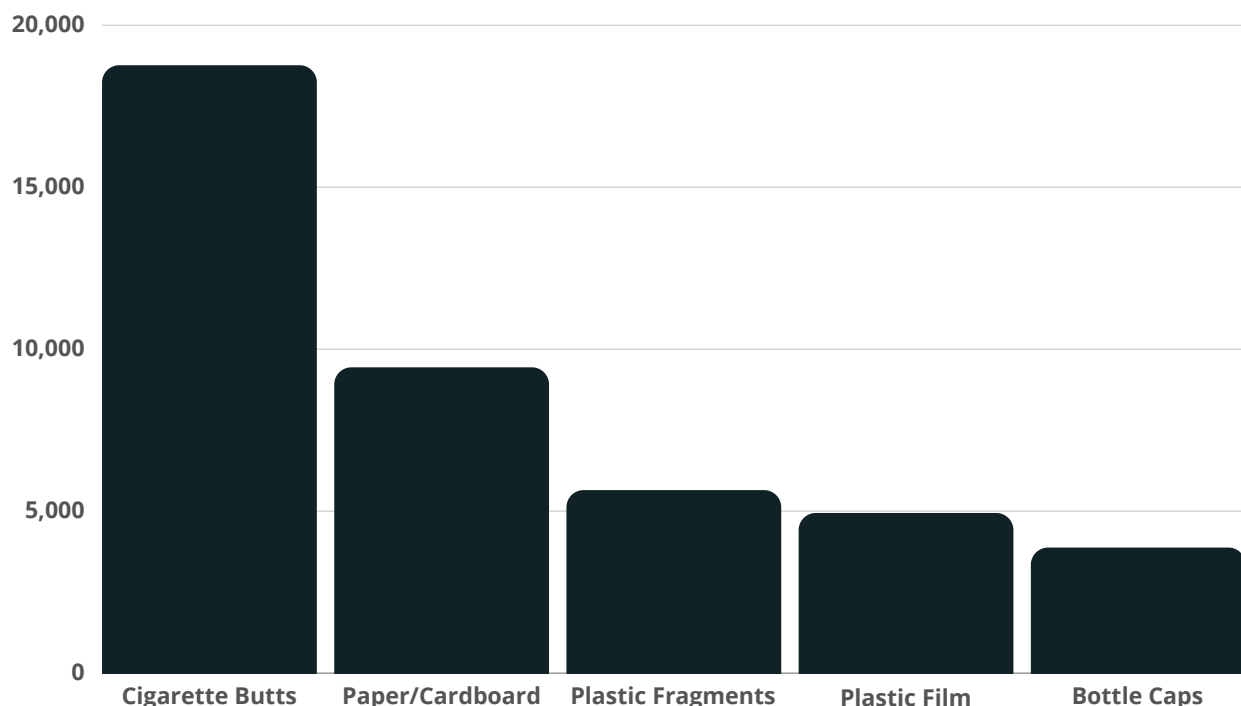
2023

2023 marked a significant milestone as we completed our fifth year of shoreline cleanups, during which we observed remarkable growth in volunteer participation, collaboration and outreach. Over the span of April to August, we successfully hosted a total of 61 shoreline cleanups. Thanks to the dedication of 455 volunteers, we collectively removed an astounding 1,417.84 pounds of garbage.

Our primary focus was directed towards conducting routine cleanups at strategic locations, including The Fishway and Little River Park in The Blue Mountains, Sunset Point in Collingwood, Beach 2 at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, and the Harbour in Midland. These efforts were pivotal in addressing and tracking human induced pollution in these popular areas.

At each shoreline cleanup, we completed waste audits on the type of litter collected, meticulously documenting the type and quantity collected at each event. This year we identified the top five most collected litter items as cigarette butts, paper/cardboard, plastic fragments, plastic film, and bottle caps.

2023 Most Commonly Collected Items

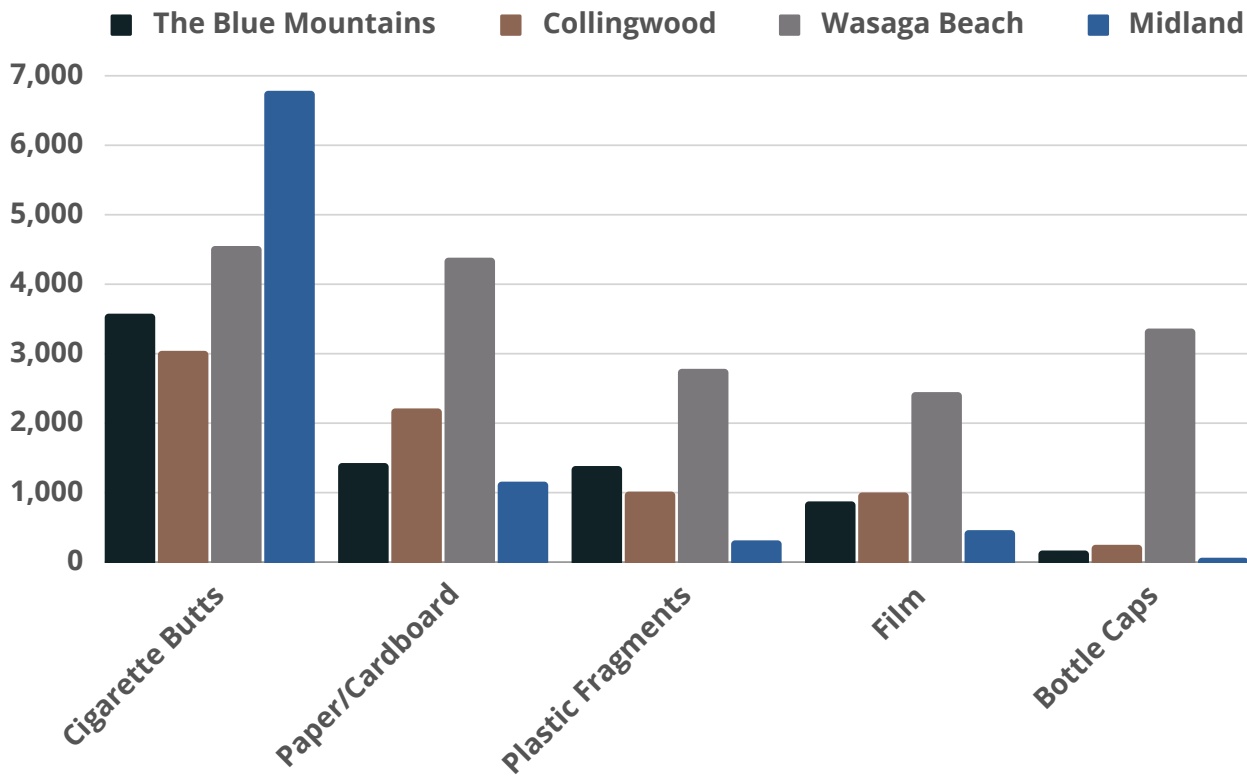


A Year in Review

While these findings are not uncommon in global statistics, we did observe variations in the quantity of these litter types per township. When reviewing the below data, it is important to consider the number of cleanups per location:

Number of Cleanups Per Township			
The Blue Mountains	Collingwood	Wasaga Beach	Midland
20	16	13	7

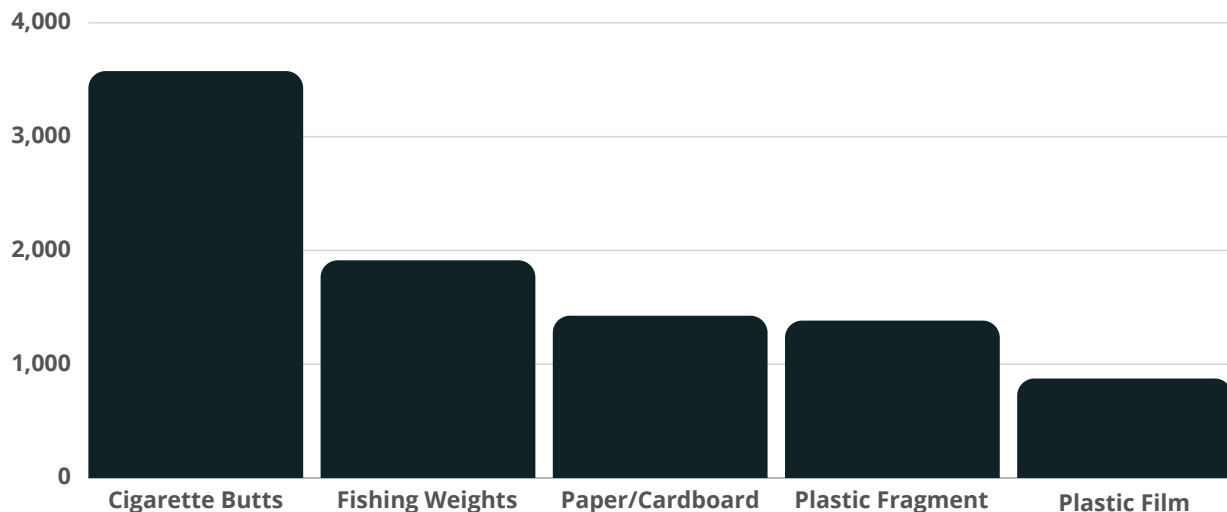
This graph represents a comparative data set between townships of the top 5 most commonly collected items from all of the 2023. The variations in the litter collected are deeply tied to the location and its primary public access use.



Waste Analysis

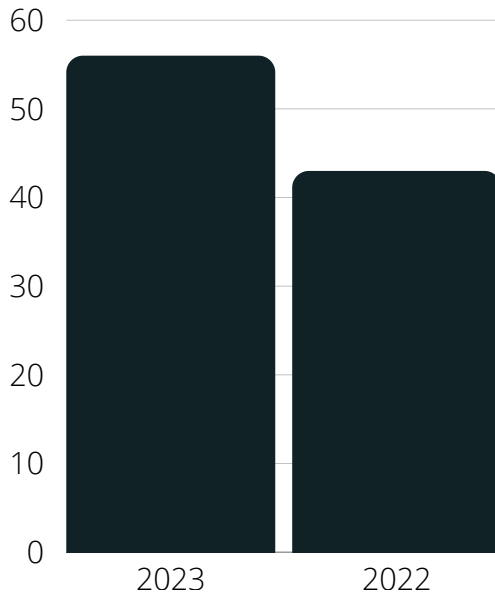
The Blue Mountains

We hosted weekly cleanups at Little River Park and bi-weekly cleanups at The Fishway, resulting in a total of 129.21 lbs of garbage collected. Despite having installed cigarette butt receptacles at these locations, cigarette butt pollution was still heavily prevalent with a total of 3,576 butts collected. We will continue to work to educate on the harmful impacts of cigarette butt pollution and encourage beach and park goers to utilize the receptacles.



Most notably, these locations were hot spots for fishing related gear. Given the popular fishing areas in these locations, we saw a significant increase in fishing related litter, with both Little River Park and The Fishway harboring more abandoned fishing gear than any other shoreline cleanup location we frequented this year.

Town of Blue Mountain Volunteer Engagement 2022-2023

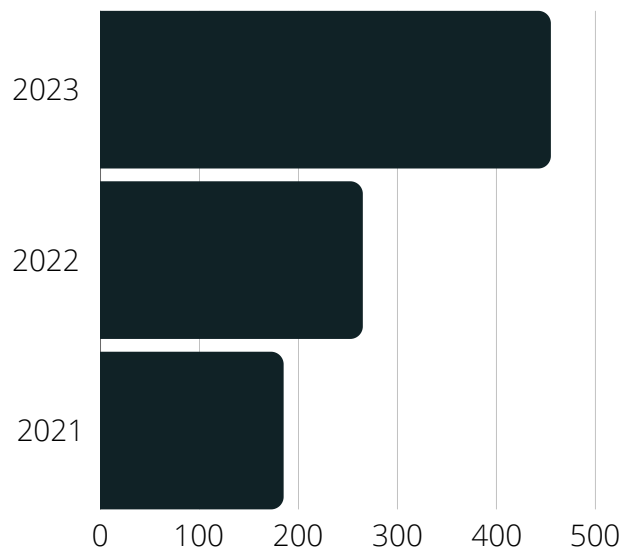


GBF employed an array of outreach strategies in 2023 to engage the local community and garner support for shoreline cleanup initiatives. These included an active social media presence, event registrations on Town calendars, targeted emails, and coverage in local news outlets.

Furthermore, the introduction of the bi-weekly volunteer raffle added an enticing element to participation, while the incorporation of interactive information stations at our booth, such as the "Where does it go?" garbage board, enhanced engagement, and awareness.

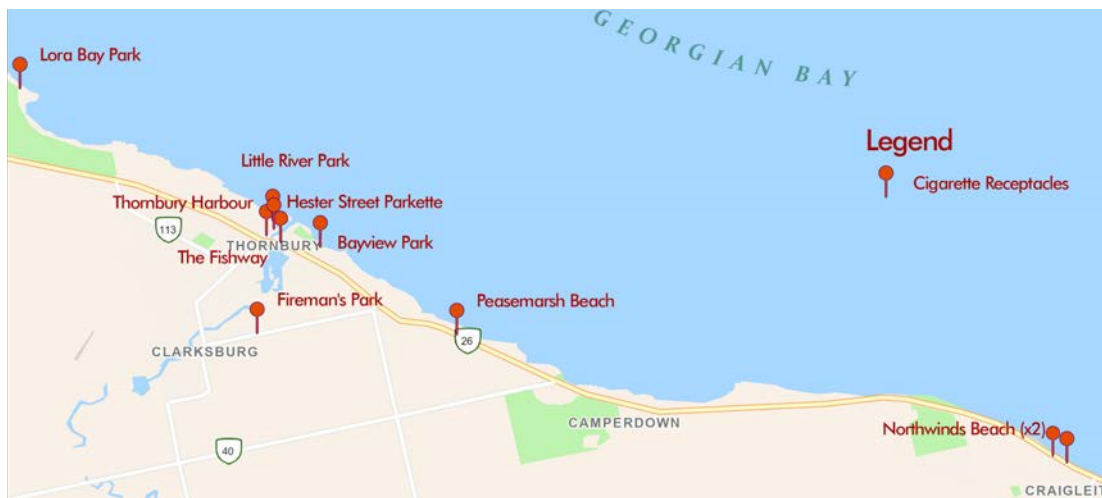
Despite these efforts, volunteer engagement did not increase as drastically as we had anticipated in The Blue Mountains. However, given our experience, it takes time and consistency to see engagement grow. This can be seen in our overall engagement which increased by approximately 149.5% from 2021-2023.

Overall Volunteer Engagement 2021-2023



UNSMOKE

Cigarette butts are the number-one most littered item in the world. In Canada alone, around 8000 tonnes of cigarette butts are littered into our environment each year. Together, the Town of The Blue Mountains and Georgian Bay Forever identified 10 hotspot areas to install cigarette butt receptacles. Locations of the receptacles can be found on the map below:



While the current usage of these receptacles has been somewhat limited, we find hope in the knowledge that these receptacles are placed correctly, as verified by TerraCycle, the trusted company responsible for recycling the collected butts. It's important to remember that similar initiatives have shown that engagement typically takes time to grow, particularly as awareness of the program spreads.

We remain optimistic that as our community becomes more familiar with these receptacles and the importance of proper cigarette butt disposal, we will witness increased use and a positive impact on the cleanliness of our town. This initial phase is a crucial building block for our future success in preserving our environment, and we look forward to continued growth in participation and support

We remain committed to educating the public about this program through future events, sharing the impact of cigarette butt pollution on the health of the watershed.

Community Collaboration

Community collaboration with local businesses is crucial for shoreline cleanups because it fosters a sense of shared responsibility and commitment to environmental stewardship. Local businesses often have a vested interest in maintaining clean and healthy shorelines, as they rely on these natural assets for tourism, recreation, and their own operations.

Their involvement can raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage sustainable practices within the community, making shoreline cleanup initiatives more effective and sustainable in the long run. By working together, communities and local businesses can have a significant positive impact on the preservation of our coastlines and the protection of marine ecosystems.

Georgian Bay Spirit Co.

We celebrated Earth Day with Georgian Bay Spirit Co. on April 21 at Little River Park for a shoreline cleanup. We even had Mayor Matrosovs join for the afternoon.



6

volunteers



42.2

lbs of garbage



Media Communications

Media opportunities provide opportunities for amplifying our messaging and mobilizing support for upcoming events, campaigns and volunteer opportunities.

This summer we were featured in several news articles and features. On August 17, 2023, Bay Watch reporter Robert Klein joined us for a shoreline cleanup and to learn more about our plastics pollutions programs including shoreline cleanups, UNSMOKE, and our most recent initiative, The Critical Catch.

To watch the full report, follow the link below:

[Bay Watch Shoreline Cleanup Report](#)



In addition, our shoreline cleanup programs have been shared in several news articles including:

- [The Beach Booster](#)
- [Collingwood Today - Shoreline Cleanup Article](#)
- [Collingwood Today - Shoreline Cleanup Grant Approval](#)
- [Collingwood Today - Pitch-In Week](#)

Shoreline cleanup information was also shared regularly through our social media channels, emails, and strategically placed posters and flyers throughout Southern Georgian Bay.

The Critical Catch

The Critical Catch aims to reduce and remove lost, abandoned, and discarded fishing gear through shoreline cleanups and installing and distributing monofilament recycling receptacles throughout Georgian Bay.

Monofilament Fishing Line

Fishing line, made from a single durable plastic fibre, does not biodegrade naturally, leading to its persistent presence in the environment. It's thin and nearly invisible nature causes it to become easily entangled and lost within vegetation, rocks and other structures, posing a major threat to fish, wildlife and ecosystems when improperly discarded or mismanaged.

Monofilament fishing line cannot be recycling through municipal waste programs. Berkley Fishing has a specialized fishing line recycling program. Collected fishing line through The Critical Catch is shipped back to Berkley Fishing for processing and safe recycling.



Recycling Receptacle Locations



Georgian Bay Forever sponsored 15 monofilament recycling receptacles from Clear Your Gear. These receptacles were installed across Georgian Bay and are monitored monthly by dedicated volunteers. Upon emptying the bins each month, we consistently found line dropped off for recycling. Throughout our shoreline cleanups, we collected all fishing line we found to return for recycling.

The specific locations can be viewed on Google Maps using the link below:

[Critical Catch Receptacle Locations](#)

Personal Recycling Containers

An element of this program focuses on promoting responsible recycling and storage of fishing line during fishing excursions, both on boats and along the shore. This summer we distributed hundreds of personal monofilament containers to anglers to encourage proper disposal and storage of their fishing line. By providing anglers with the means to conveniently manage their monofilament fishing line, we are working towards safeguarding aquatic ecosystems and promoting eco-friendly angling habits.



Collected Fishing Line Findings



As part of The Critical Catch program, GBF, in collaboration with dedicated volunteers, undertook the collection of approximately 38,418.87 meters of fishing line. This calculation is based on both the total weight and the average weight per meter, which was established through a systematic sampling method involving 10 samples of 10 meters each.

Total weight of collected fishing line: 2,070.393g

Sampling method: 10 samples of 10 meters each

Total length of fishing line sampled: 100 meters

Total weight of the sampled fishing line: 5.389g

Average weight of 1 meter of fishing line (sampled):

$5.389 \text{ g} / 100 \text{ m} = 0.05389 \text{ g/m}$

Considerations

It is important to acknowledge that, despite the diligent efforts of both staff and volunteers, it was not feasible to remove 100% of the weights, lures, and hooks from the collected fishing line. This limitation may impact the total weight recorded. It is crucial to recognize that the presented findings represent the best estimate of the total meters of fishing line collected, considering both shoreline cleanups and monofilament recycling stations.

Next Steps & Recommendations

Moving forward with shoreline cleanups in the Town of the Blue Mountains, it's imperative to focus on strategies that enhance volunteer engagement and community participation. Building rapport within the community can be achieved by organizing regular clean-up events, partnering with local businesses, and establishing a visible presence at community gatherings. By fostering a sense of shared responsibility and highlighting the positive impact of these initiatives, we can create a more sustainable and actively engaged community dedicated to preserving our precious shorelines.

While cigarette butt pollution is prolific across the globe, taking a targeted approach to curb pollution would be strongly encouraged. This could include implementing cigarette butt littering bylaws, and increasing community awareness through targeted media outreach initiatives.

We look forward to the 2024 shoreline cleanup season where we can continue to work to spread awareness and education on plastic pollution, while contributing to a valuable dataset.



Acknowledgements

This project and many others are made possible by our wonderful partners, who continue to support and fund Georgian Bay Forever's research and outreach:

Town of The Blue Mountains
The Hodgson Family Foundation
Great Lakes Local Action Fund

Thank you to our valuable partners:

The Town of Collingwood, Town of Meaford, Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, Rotary Club of Midland, Rotary Club of Wasaga Beach, Wasaga Beach Climate Action Team, Magnetawan First Nation, Georgian Bay Spirit Co., Lake Huron Coastal Centre, Pretty River Academy, Collingwood Youth Centre, and Clear Your Gear.

A special thank you to our volunteers:

To each and every one of our volunteers, your contributions have been invaluable, and your positive impact on this project will be long-lasting. We are deeply grateful for your selflessness and the countless hours you devoted to making this endeavor a triumph.

Your commitment and hard work are a testament to the power of collective effort and the strength of a united team. We couldn't have done it without you.

Connect with Us

Georgian Bay Forever is committed to addressing plastic pollution through research, education, and innovative solutions. By working with or volunteering for GBF, you'll become an integral part of a dedicated team striving to make a positive impact on the environment.

Get Involved

Plastic-Free Pledge:

Join the GBF community in taking the Plastic-Free Pledge, committing to reducing single-use plastics in your daily life.

Community Cleanups:

Take part in local clean-up events and contribute to the removal of plastic debris from our shores and waterways.

Outreach and Education:

Help raise awareness about the issue by becoming an advocate or organizing educational activities in your community.

Fundraising:

Support our work by participating in fundraising events or organizing your own campaigns to generate resources for our programs.

Summer Employment:

Explore potential job opportunities at GBF to deepen your involvement and contribute professionally to our mission.



Phone Number
905-880-4945



Email Address
ashley.morrison@gbf.org



Website
www.georgianbayforever.org



Instagram
@gbayforever