



Beach Cleanup in California

Fall 2026

Objective

The goal of this initiative was to combine environmental education with direct community action at **Main Beach in Santa Cruz, California**. Following a short educational session about beach cleanups, marine litter, and volunteer safety, 18 volunteers cleaned the beach, collected four bags of trash, and raised awareness about the effects of waste on beaches and coastal ecosystems.



Give Earth a Smile

Challenges & Opportunities	<i>Give Earth a Smile</i> acknowledges that Santa Cruz beaches are valued public spaces and important coastal habitats, yet litter can accumulate through recreation, storm drains, wind, and tides. Plastic, food packaging, cigarette waste, and other debris can harm wildlife, enter the ocean, and reduce the safety and beauty of the shoreline. • Marine animals may swallow trash or become entangled in it. • Plastic can break into smaller pieces that remain in coastal ecosystems. • Litter left near the water can be carried into Monterey Bay by wind and waves. • Visitors may not understand how everyday waste affects beaches and ocean life. • A volunteer cleanup creates an opportunity to combine learning, service, and public awareness.
Proposed Solution	To respond to these challenges, <i>Give Earth a Smile</i> organized an education-led cleanup at Main Beach in Santa Cruz. The project began with a short learning session that introduced volunteers to the purpose of beach cleanups, the effects of marine litter, and safe collection practices. Volunteers then worked together to remove waste from the beach and speak with others about coastal pollution. Our solution includes: • An educational session on beach litter and its environmental effects. • A safety briefing and distribution of cleanup supplies. • A coordinated cleanup completed by 18 volunteers at Main Beach. • Collection of four bags of trash from the shoreline and surrounding areas. • Awareness-building conversations about preventing trash from reaching beaches and the ocean
Project Benefits	The cleanup produced environmental, educational, and community benefits. Four bags of trash were removed before the debris could remain on the beach or enter the ocean. The 18 volunteers strengthened their understanding of marine pollution and saw how direct service can protect a shared public space. By discussing the causes and effects of beach litter, the project also encouraged responsible waste habits and helped spread awareness among beach visitors. The event advanced Give Earth a Smile's mission by connecting environmental learning with practical, youth-led action.



Project Overview

Give Earth a Smile organized a community beach cleanup at Main Beach in Santa Cruz, California. The project combined a short educational session with hands-on volunteer service.

Format: A two-part event beginning with an educational session on beach cleanup practices, marine litter, and safety, followed by a coordinated cleanup at Main Beach

Objective: To help volunteers understand the effects of litter on beaches and marine ecosystems, remove trash from a heavily used coastal area, and spread awareness about preventing beach pollution.

Target Groups and Schools

- **Primary Participants:** 18 volunteers who took part in the educational session and cleanup.
- **Community Audience:** Beach visitors and community members reached through volunteer conversations and visible cleanup activity.
- **Site Selection Considerations:**
 - A public beach where litter can affect people, wildlife, and coastal water.
 - A location suitable for supervised volunteer participation.
 - An area where cleanup activity could also create public awareness.
 - A site where collected waste could be safely bagged and removed.



Overview of Implementation Phases

Phase 1: Planning and Coordination

Activities:

- A public beach where litter can affect people, wildlife, and coastal water.
- A location suitable for supervised volunteer participation.
- An area where cleanup activity could also create public awareness.
- A site where collected waste could be safely bagged and removed.

Timeline / Duration:

1-2 weeks prior

Responsibility:

- Project Manager
- Volunteers

Phase 2: Education and Safety Preparation

Activities:

- Prepare the beach pollution lesson
- Review local litter impacts
- Organize gloves, bags, and safety materials
- Plan volunteer instructions

Timeline / Duration:

Before the cleanup

Responsibility:

- Education Lead
- Safety Coordinator

Phase 3: Main Beach Cleanup

Activities:

- Deliver the educational session
- Conduct the safety briefing
- Deploy 18 volunteers in teams
- Collect and bag shoreline trash

Timeline / Duration:

1 cleanup session
(4-6 hours)

Responsibility:

- Volunteers
- Project Lead

Phase 4: Documentation and Awareness

Activities:

- Count and document four bags collected
- Dispose of waste appropriately
- Share pollution-prevention messages
- Record outcomes and lessons learned

Timeline / Duration:

Immediately after the
cleanup

Responsibility:

- Project Lead
- Volunteers



Beach Cleanup Activity Plan

Activity 1: Educational Session
• Objective: Introduce volunteers to beach litter, marine pollution, and the purpose of organized cleanups • Description: Volunteers learned how trash reaches beaches, how plastics and other debris affect wildlife and water quality, and how cleanup efforts support healthier coastal ecosystems • Outcome: Participants began the cleanup with a shared understanding of the problem and the impact of their service
Activity 2: Safety Briefing and Team Organization
• Objective: Prepare volunteers to collect litter safely and efficiently. • Description: Organizers reviewed boundaries, safe handling practices, items volunteers should not touch, and procedures for using gloves and bags. The 18 volunteers were organized into teams before entering the cleanup area • Outcome: Volunteers understood their roles and followed a coordinated approach.
Activity 3: Main Beach Cleanup
• Objective: Remove litter from Main Beach and prevent debris from remaining in or reaching the coastal environment. • Description: Volunteers moved through designated areas of Main Beach, collecting visible trash while paying attention to frequently littered spaces. Together, the teams filled four bags with waste. • Outcome: Four bags of trash were removed through the work of 18 volunteers.
Activity 4: Awareness and Reflection
• Objective: Extend the project's impact beyond the waste collected during the event. • Description: Volunteers discussed the types of litter they found, reflected on how the waste could affect beaches and marine life, and shared awareness messages about preventing trash from reaching the shoreline. • Outcome: The cleanup combined measurable environmental action with greater public understanding of beach pollution and responsible waste disposal.