

Boston Harbor Marine Debris Removal and Prevention Program 2008 Report



Program Manager:
The Boston Harbor Association

Program Partners:
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the City of Boston
Massachusetts Port Authority
Eastern Salt Company, Inc

Introduction:

The Boston Harbor Marine Debris Removal and Prevention Program is a unique collaboration of public and private partners working together to remove and prevent marine debris in Boston Harbor. The Boston Harbor Association launched the project in 2000. The goals for the program each year are to remove source pollution and risk to marine life and people, eliminate navigational hazards, improve the aesthetics of Boston Harbor, promote a sustainable harbor through materials recycling, identify and eliminate sources of marine debris, and conduct educational outreach to reduce and prevent sources of marine debris.

During the past nine summers, more than 220 tons of floatable debris have been removed from Boston Harbor, making it safer for marine life, swimmers and boaters. The Boston Harbor Association has contracted with Boston Line & Service Co. to handle on-water operations and to coordinate a recycling effort. Historically, debris has included large pilings, construction debris, and smaller trash such as plastic bottles, paper cups, wood, paper, and wrappers.

In partnership with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the City of Boston, Massport, and Eastern Salt Company, the Summer 2008 Marine Debris Cleanup Program was launched on 5 July 2008 with a cleanup of the Charles River following the 4th of July Boston Pops concert on the Esplanade.

Geographic Focus:

The geographic focus of the program was primarily the Inner Harbor. More specifically it focused on portions of South Boston including the John Joseph Moakley Courthouse, Fort Point Channel, Fish Pier, World Trade Center, and Pleasure Bay. Debris was removed from the downtown waterfront, including Rowes Wharf, India Wharf, Central Wharf, Long Wharf, and Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park. The lower Charles River, the Charlestown Navy Yard, Chelsea Creek and portions of East Boston such as Piers Park and Jeffries Cove were also monitored for marine debris.

Debris Data:

The program began in early July and ran through the middle of October and collected a high volume of waste from the specific locations mentioned above. The debris that was removed consisted of: plastic wrappers (20%), paper cup/packages (13%), cigarette butts/packages (8%), plastic bottles (17%), Styrofoam cups (19%), small (under 10') wood (7%), rubber items (8%), styrofoam buoys or floats (3%), fishing line netting (2%), and large 6-10' debris (3%).

Progress of Program:

The Marine Debris Cleanup Program continues to be an ongoing success in helping to ensure a cleaner Boston Harbor. 2008 was the first year that plastic bottles, which account for approximately 20% of the marine debris yearly, were separated and sorted at the point of collection for recycling. This effort complements the designation of Boston Harbor beginning in 2008 as a "No Discharge Area" by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The designation prohibits all

commercial and recreational vessels from releasing wastewater, even if treated, within three miles of the shoreline; instead all boats are required to pump out sewage at one of over 35 pump out facilities in the Greater Boston area.

Debris Prevention:

The Boston Harbor Association works with local Conservation Commissions to ensure that construction activities along the waterfront minimize the amount of debris and construction material that enter Boston Harbor, and with waterfront property owners to ensure that trash receptacles are emptied on a timely basis to avoid overflow and debris into the Harbor. Preventing debris from entering Boston Harbor is key in maintaining a clean harbor and waterfront.