

BUTT-O-METER

Background

Coastal Cleanup Day is a quarter-century old tradition. Did you realize that cigarette butts have consistently been the most-often collected item at these events? Since its first year, Coastal Cleanup Day has recorded nearly 53 million cigarette butts gathered, which account for a third of all debris. Those are enough cigarettes to completely fill 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Even more daunting is consideration of all the chemicals that can leach out of these cigarettes, such as arsenic, ammonia, and lead. The chemicals found in one cigarette butt can leach out and contaminate approximately 7.5 liters of water within one hour. This contaminated water is lethal to aquatic life.

Below are instructions on how you can keep track of how many cigarette butts are collected at your cleanup site and, ultimately, how many liters of water you are saving from pollution.

Supplies

- 2-liter plastic bottle
- Scissors
- Sharpie

Instructions

Step 1: Collect a 2-liter plastic bottle, preferably one that is transparent and colorless.

Step 2: Print out the scale on page two. This will serve as your “ruler” in calculating your cleanup site’s impact.

Step 3: Cut out the scale on the solid lines. Fold along the dotted lines. Adhere the scale to the side of the bottle using transparent tape on the two fold flaps.

Step 4: Using a sharpie, draw a line around the bottle, connecting either end of each butt measure.

Step 5: Collect cigarette butts at the event. During your safety talk, include a blurb about cigarette litter and its impact on the environment. Ask volunteers to collect cigarette butts to be added to your display. If you anticipate collecting more than one bottle’s worth of butts, create additional butt-o-meters to showcase your entire haul.



250 butts

(1875 liters of
water saved)

200 butts

(1500 liters of
water saved)

150 butts

(1125 liters of
water saved)

100 butts

(750 liters of
water saved)

50 butts

(375 liters of
water saved)