

# CIGARETTE BUTT WATER POLLUTION

## 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 to create a simple display showing the impact of discarded cigarette butts on the marine environment.

## Supplies

- Two 8 ounce clear cups
- 1 cigarette butt
- Water
- 2 Labels
- Black marker

## Instructions

**Step 1:** Take two 8 ounce cups. Label the one cup “Clean Water” and another “Water with a Cigarette Butt”.

**Step 2:** Fill each up with ambient temperature water.

**Step 3:** Take a cigarette butt and put it in one of the cups. Let it sit for at least 30 minutes. You will soon have a polluted water cup ready for display. OR describe your display in your initial safety talk to volunteers. Place the cigarette in the water as your present and remind volunteers to check on the display once they return from cleaning up. They will return to a very polluted cup of water.

**Step 4:** Print out text below and place next to the display.

“Did you know? One cigarette butt can contaminate 7 liters of water in one hour. Studies show that about half of all animals that are exposed to the contaminated water get sick from the chemicals of cigarette butts.”