We invite you to join us to beat plastic pollution!

Plastic pollution from the Mississippi River contributes as much as 40% of the huge volume of plastic flowing into the Atlantic Ocean each year from the Gulf of Mexico. In September 2018, cities and towns along the Mississippi River came together to tackle plastic marine debris along the largest navigable river in the world and became the first ever river system in the world to join the United Nations Clean Seas campaign.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) North America Office, MRCTI, the University of Georgia, National Geographic Society, and other partners are collaborating on a pilot initiative aiming to generate a snapshot of the state of plastic pollution along the river. The data will be generated through a ‘citizen science’ approach, enlisting the participation of community volunteers. Participants will be trained in the use of a free mobile phone app for tracking marine litter, called the Marine Debris Tracker. This tool was originally developed by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the University of Georgia. To date, Marine Debris Tracker users have contributed over 4 million items to an open data platform.

The Quad Cities have been selected for Phase 2 of this important initiative. The data gathered in the Quad Cities will be analyzed to understand the state of plastic litter in river communities in the region. The goal is to generate as rich a picture as possible within a dedicated timeframe, of the extent and type of litter along the Mississippi River, with data being collected through partner and Xstream planned cleanups and transect data collection activities.

We are asking for your help to:
- Share educational and outreach materials about plastics in inland waters. Social media resources will be shared for various platforms for posting
- Promote the need for data collection utilizing the Marine Debris Tracker App and deliver instructions for use
- Determine feasible locations for data collection
- Provide connection to community members and educators to disseminate information, including resource material for K-12 students
- Rally participation through your networks
- Support local data collection events

Tentative Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August – September 2021</td>
<td>Selection of partner organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>September – October 2021</td>
<td>Partners informed, empowered, and engaged in the initiative: distribution of education and outreach materials; training on the Debris Tracker App; locations for data collection selected</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2021</td>
<td>Boots on the ground = data collection! This will include community supported “launch” events with press and community engagement (as applicable)</td>
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<td>November 2021</td>
<td>Final report delivered</td>
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Jennifer Wendt
Plastic Waste Reduction Campaign Manager

Mississippi River
Cities & Towns Initiative
An Association of United States Mayors

Our River Like Our Democracy Shall Flow Unhindered 2021

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