

Press release for immediate release

RECORD-BREAKING SUCCESS AT THE 2024 CLEAN-UP & RECYCLE SA WEEK

Johannesburg, 25 September 2024. The annual [Clean-Up & Recycle SA](#) Week, held from 16-21 September, marked its 28th year of bringing together communities, businesses, and schools to raise awareness about waste management and environmental care. The week culminated in the International Coastal Clean-Up (ICC) Day on Saturday, 21 September, with hundreds of volunteers clearing litter from beaches across the country.

Douw Steyn, Sustainability Director at Plastics SA, said this year's campaign once again saw unprecedented support and participation. "Thanks to generous contributions from our sponsors, we were able to print and distribute a record-breaking 800,000 bags to clean-up coordinators nationwide. We are immensely thankful for the excellent contributions and support we received from the plastics industry, various brand owners, PROs, logistics companies, and NGOs. Their commitment has been vital to the success of Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week for many years, and we deeply appreciate their continued partnership."

The response to Plastics SA's call to become involved in cleaning up the environment was overwhelming, with over 50 audited cleanups taking place across the country. These were organised by schools, NGOs, municipalities, businesses, industry role-players, and community volunteers who were all eager to make a difference where they work, live or play. Beach clean-ups were coordinated along the entire South African coastline, ensuring widespread participation.

Volunteers braved challenging weather, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where rainy conditions failed to dampen the enthusiasm and high spirits of participants. One of the key highlights this year was the personal involvement of Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Narend Singh, who attended the beach cleanup at Durban's Cutting Beach. His presence provided an invaluable opportunity for discussion around Plastics SA's commitment to fostering a cleaner environment and encouraging recycling practices. In his address to the community, businesses, and schoolchildren present, Singh emphasised the importance of building proper waste management and recycling infrastructure and urged the public to avoid littering.

In Cape Town, major clean-ups took place at various sites around the city, including the Milnerton Beach lagoon where around 400 kg of waste was cleared from the beach on Saturday and 394 kg on Sunday thanks to Save a Fishie and volunteers who worked their way through clothes, bottle tops and nappies, while Captain Fanplastic organised a clean-up of the Liesbeek River. Plastics SA sponsored this clean-up with a schools toolkit in honour of ICC.

Despite the challenges, such as the cost and logistical complexity of delivering bags across the country, the Sustainable Seas Trust and Plastics SA worked tirelessly to ensure that all coordinators received supplies on time. "Our provincial and ICC coordinators are the real stars," Steyn said. "They ensure that all bags are distributed to schools, municipalities, and volunteers".

The 2024 event also introduced a new competition, inviting individuals and community groups to showcase their recycling actions or cleanup efforts. Winners of the various categories will be announced in October.

Plastics SA continues to work closely with packaging PROs, providing education, infrastructure, and training to waste collectors, which adds value to collected materials.

“The Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week has proven to be an impactful educational tool in promoting recycling and environmental care. While the primary focus is on cleaning beaches, rivers, and roadsides, the event also encourages people to recycle at home, school, and work,” Steyn says.

However, despite the campaign's successes, challenges remain. Many cleanup sites lack facilities or collectors capable of processing recyclables, meaning that some collected waste inevitably ends up in landfills. While volunteers are encouraged to recycle, sorting materials during these short cleanups is often difficult. Efforts are underway to ensure that waste collectors receive the cleanup bags and extract recyclable materials before the remainder is sent to landfill.

“The Clean-Up & Recycle SA campaign continues to raise awareness about the critical importance of recycling and environmental conservation. With ongoing efforts to strengthen infrastructure, increase public participation, and provide education, Plastics SA and its partners are dedicated to building a cleaner, greener future for South Africa,” Steyn concludes.

For more information about Plastics SA and their environmental initiatives, visit www.plasticsinfo.co.za.

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Volunteers cleaning up Cutting Beach in KwaZulu-Natal on International Coastal Clean-Up Day