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PLASTIC ITEMS ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST 70 PERCENT OF LITTER IN AUSTIN

Local Organizations and Volunteers Collected 6,656 Pieces of Trash During TrashBlitz Austin

AUSTIN, TEXAS (October 18, 2021) – The 5 Gyres Institute, Inland Ocean Coalition, Into the Sea, and Litterati unveil cleanup data from #TrashBlitzAustin, a community science program engaging local stakeholders in collecting data on waste, revealing that plastic made up the majority of trash found. More than 160 volunteers collected trash from 80 sites around the Austin area throughout May and June. TrashBlitz utilized the Litterati app and data platform, which categorizes litter by type, material, and brand to better understand the sources and brands collected.

Food and drink, smoking materials, and personal hygiene made up the top three categories found, and nearly 70 percent of all items collected were made of plastic. Single-use plastics, including wrappers, bottles, caps, straws, bags, and utensils, were the most common items found. Repeatedly topping the list of biggest corporate plastic polluters in the world¹, Coca-Cola was the top brand identified, followed by Marlboro, McDonalds, Swisher Sweets, and Gatorade.

The data collected from Austin underscores an urgent need for policy change and legislation that addresses single-use plastic and enables a shift toward a culture of reuse. Volunteers observed plastic litter in bodies of water that carry pollution to other regions and out to sea, with the highest concentrations of plastic found at Walnut Creek, Shoal Creek, and Lady Bird Lake watersheds. The City of Austin has access to the TrashBlitz data, which provides valuable information about plastic usage (where, what type, and how much) and can be used to propel policy change to address single-use plastic. Plastic poses a threat to the environment, wildlife, and local communities and has a direct impact on the health of future generations.

¹ <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/globalbrandauditreport2020/>

“We are all stakeholders in the health and future of our planet, and community science can be a powerful tool,” said Madeline Kennedy, co-founder of Into the Sea. “Data from #TrashBlitzAustin can help further campaigns, strengthen legislation, and foster environmental stewardship within the Austin community.”

TrashBlitz is a community-based initiative that utilizes a network of NGOs, volunteers, and local projects to collect data that can be used to support better policies around plastic production, usage, and disposal. 5 Gyres partnered with Litterati, Inland Ocean Coalition, and Into the Sea to execute TrashBlitz Austin, along with 78 trained citizen science researchers.

Litterati identified census block group clusters with statistically similar demographic profiles to generalize findings of the amount and composition of Austin’s litter. Data was collected from about 13 miles of linear sampling across research locations, covering a diverse and representative set of sociodemographic areas throughout the city.

#TrashBlitzAustin is the third TrashBlitz initiative, following Los Angeles in 2019 and Denver in 2020.

The full report from TrashBlitz Austin can be found [here](#). For more information, visit 5gyres.org/trashblitz and www.trashblitz.org.

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About TrashBlitz

TrashBlitz is a data collection platform and community-focused research project created by The 5 Gyres Institute. The community-based project is designed to engage local stakeholders in measuring plastic pollution and other trash across various cities - from shorelines to riverbeds to urban neighborhoods - and utilizing data to generate relevant action plans. TrashBlitz provides robust research protocols, a web-based app that identifies problem products and brands, and a platform to bring diverse stakeholders together to co-create solutions to stop plastic pollution at the source.

About The 5 Gyres Institute

The 5 Gyres Institute is a leader in the global movement against plastic pollution with more than 10 years of expertise in scientific research and engagement on plastic pollution issues. Since

2009, the team has completed 19 expeditions, bringing more than 300 citizen scientists, corporate executives, brands, and celebrities to the gyres, lakes, and rivers to conduct first-hand research on plastic pollution. Through this research, 5 Gyres engages diverse stakeholders in understanding the science to drive impact as well as conduct community outreach and citizen science to implement data-driven solutions. With over 1,400 Ambassadors in 66 countries, 5 Gyres supports and is supported by community members with information, tools and connections to help drive local change to fight this global crisis.

About Litterati

Litterati empowers anyone to identify, map, and collect the world's litter, while also connecting to a broader community of associated brands, cities, schools, and individuals. Litterati applies geospatial data science to uncover where and why littering is occurring so that effective solutions can be implemented to reduce it at the source.

About Inland Ocean Coalition

The Inland Ocean Coalition's unifying charge is to develop a two-way relationship with the ocean and the inland. Those who live among mountains, rivers, and inland cities have a direct impact on the cycles of life in the ocean. As the nation's first Inland Ocean Movement, our goal is to be a wellspring for literacy and community engagement across North America.

About Into the Sea

Into the sea is a service-based nonprofit bringing awareness to plastic pollution in the ocean. We are a community-based organization focused on helping make the world around us a healthier, happier place. We work collaboratively with community partners to organize creek, river, city and ocean cleanups, exciting community-building events, and in-depth educational trainings. Into the Sea has been an organizing partner with 5 Gyres for TrashBlitz since its second iteration in Denver, Colorado in 2020.