



Youth Marine Debris Prevention & Education Program

Project Status

Project Year: 2015

Status: Ongoing

Category: Education

Location: Fourchon, LA

Project Partners: Greater Lafourche Port Commission, Terrebonne Parish Public Schools, Lafourche Parish Public Schools, Archdiocese of Houma/Thibodaux Schools

Background and Problem Addressed:

The most southern edge of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary has a marine debris problem. Marine debris is defined as persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally disposed of or abandoned in marine environments. BTNEP wanted to see a major reduction in marine debris and support EPA's Trash Free Waters Initiative.

Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes in Louisiana are known for their many waterways and outdoor recreational activities. Much of the marine debris found on beaches and in waterways comes from littering and dumping. If fisherman, boaters, travelers, and the people on the roads disposed of their trash properly, our marine debris problem would be minor.

The goal of this program is to bring awareness about marine debris to the youth and public officials of two coastal parishes.



“Our best chance to reach the target audience is through the youth of our communities.”



Youth Marine Debris Prevention & Education Program

Project Description:

The purpose of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) Youth Marine Debris Prevention and Education Program is to stop marine debris at the source. The BTNEP Youth Marine Debris Prevention and Education Program engages high school students in understanding marine debris, researching causes, and the writing of a Marine Debris Prevention Plan. Juniors and seniors from nine high schools in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parish spend one day per quarter in the field with BTNEP. The students research marine debris, collect marine debris, analyze the data, prepare "Action Items" to stop it at the source, and then present their plan to their high schools and the Lafourche and Terrebonne parish government officials.

The students travel to Port Fourchon, Louisiana once per quarter and pick up trash on the beach. The students record the trash on data forms and bag it for disposal. Students then gather in a meeting to discuss their findings and determine the sources of the debris and formulate "Action Items" to prevent the trash from entering our waterways. They also use discussion time to prepare the Marine Debris Prevention Plan which may include a video and/or a PowerPoint presentation. The students also spend a weekend at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium. During this time, they take a boat to two uninhabited barrier islands in Terrebonne Parish. Along with the "Plan", the students dissect fish stomachs caught in the Gulf of Mexico off Louisiana's coast to identify ingested plastic pollutants.

After four field trips, the students spend 2 to 3 days traveling to each of their high schools as a group to give their presentation to their peers. Over 10,000 students hear this presentation and learn about the "Action Items" planned to stop marine debris. The students also present their plan to the Lafourche and Terrebonne parish councils.

CCMP Action Items Addressed:

Citizen Involvement Programs and Activities (Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement #3)

Citizen Monitoring Program (Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement #4)

Continuing and Informal Education Program (Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement #15)



Marine Debris Tracking GPS Device

