

2019 Park Over Plastic Highlights



Introduction

Hudson River Park (the Park) crosses a range of unique neighborhoods in New York City, offering multiple recreational and educational activities for local residents and city visitors, and plays an important role in protecting the Hudson River Estuary ecosystem. As a waterfront park, the Park sees firsthand the impacts of plastics on the River and wildlife. For the last four years, the Park has been a leader in regional macroplastics and microplastics research and developed an ongoing monitoring program to understand concentrations of plastic pollution within the Park's Estuarine Sanctuary and on its shorelines.

In 2019, the Park developed the Park Over Plastic initiative (POP) to reduce the use of plastic in the Park and educate on the impacts of plastic in the Park's sanctuary waters. Led by a team of Park staff, POP aims to engage a diverse group of Park stakeholders in supporting the initiative and building a more sustainable community.

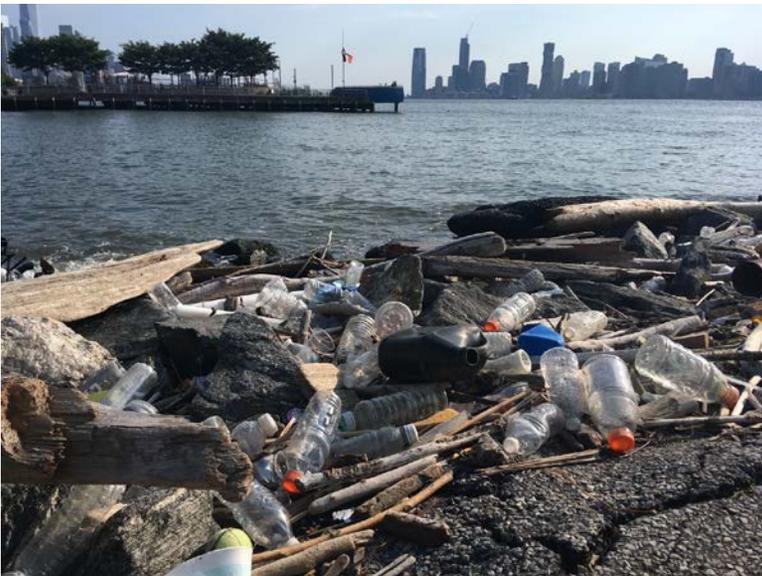


Figure 1: 8 million metric tons of plastic winds up in our oceans each year and Hudson River Park is committed to reducing its plastic footprint.



Figure 2: POP branding to promote plastic reduction messaging Park-wide.

Goals

POP intends to foster a growing alliance of Park staff, visitors, tenant businesses, and other stakeholders to support our mission to reduce plastic pollution in the Park. Building on its history of implementing environmental best practices, the Park also hopes to become a local leader in single-use plastic reduction and create a model for parks across the country working towards plastic-free goals.

1. Increase recycling bins and drinking fountains in the Park.
2. Eliminate single-use plastics at all Park events.
3. Develop plastic reduction agreement with Park tenants.
4. Replace plastic beverage bottles at all Park vending machines.
5. Update event permit contracts to prohibit single-use plastic.
6. Increase plastic pollution education and research.
7. Evaluate the POP initiative through a two-year audit.

Highlights

Since POP's kickoff in May 2019, the Park has developed an extensive single-use plastic reduction program involving local community members, NYC schools and tenant businesses. The Park has ceased nearly all purchasing and use of single-use plastics in its offices and operational areas and vetted suitable green alternatives where necessary. Additionally, the Park partnered with Knology to evaluate the POP program in its first two years.

Park-Wide Updates to Date:

- ❖ 25 additional **recycling bins** available Park-wide
- ❖ 50+ indoor and outdoor **water fountains** available Park-wide
- ❖ Plastic reduction **policies** implemented in event permits/leases
- ❖ Expanded shoreline cleanup and **research** site at Pier 76

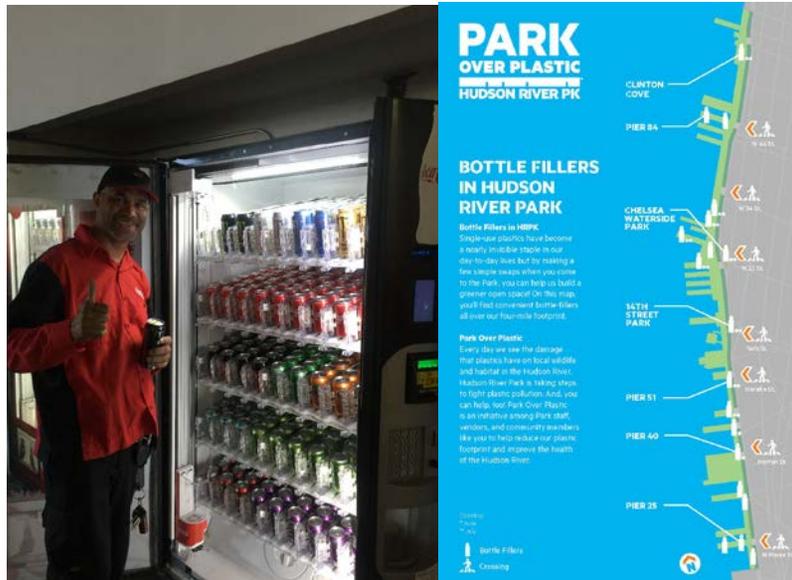


Figure 3: (Left) HRPK Coca Cola vending machines will be 100% plastic free by April 2020. (Right) Bottle fillers throughout the Park help encourage Park users to carry reusable water bottles.



Figure 4: NYC students learn about plastic pollution and create community-level solutions at Hudson River Park's education programs.

Community Engagement to Date:

- ❖ 14 **Green Partners** committed to reducing plastics
- ❖ 555 pounds of **marine debris** removed from Park shorelines
- ❖ 9,800 students and Park visitors participated in **educational programming**
- ❖ **Green Resource Guide** available for public and tenant use

Impact

Park Over Plastic initiated a significant reduction in single-use plastic waste in its first seven months of operation during 2019. Five indoor water fountains have prevented the use of over 50,000 single-use plastic water bottles. With the introduction of aluminum cans in Coca Cola vending machines throughout the Park in 2019, there was nearly a 19% decrease in plastic beverage bottles sold since 2018.

In 2019, volunteers and Park staff counted and categorized over 4,100 plastic pieces and entered into a national database by the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration. Nearly 20% of the plastic debris recovered was recyclable and a large majority of those plastics were Type 1 (PET), examples being beverage bottles and to-go cups. The Park’s continued research in macroplastics and microplastics will help to inform the progress of POP’s impact in promoting sustainable behavior change in New Yorkers.

Top Ten Most Prevalent Macroplastics surveyed

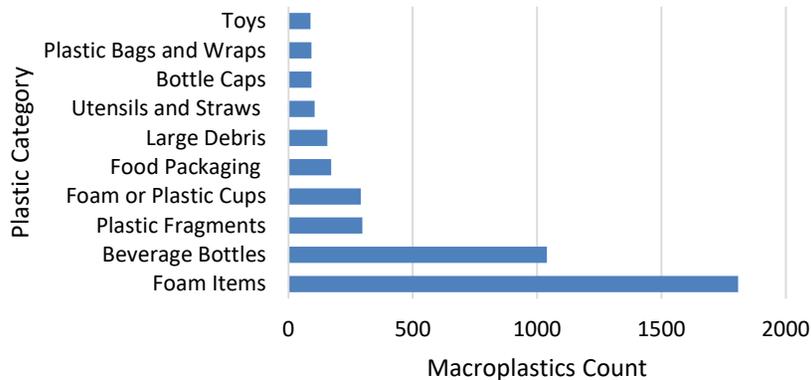


Figure 5: Foam, beverage bottles and utensils/straws/cups were the most common plastics collected at shoreline cleanups.

Future Directions

In 2019, Hudson River Park mobilized a wide range of audiences in the fight for a plastic free environment. Overall, the Park’s program evaluation conducted with Knology showed that Park visitors, Park tenant businesses and Park staff are all motivated and eager to support the initiative. The Park will continue to help reduce barriers for its community by providing educational resources, latest plastic alternative products, recycling best practices and volunteer opportunities for plastic cleanups. The Park will also explore ways to advance the POP initiative by increasing Green Partner participation, expanding waste management and increasing Park-wide plastic communications and media. New methods and technologies for collecting and measuring marine debris in the Hudson River, such as a WasteShark, are also being explored. The Park is committed to fighting plastic pollution and helping our community decrease our waste stream.



Figure 6: A plume of marine debris from one of the thirty combined sewer outfalls within the Park.