



## AHOI partnership to reduce plastic waste leads to Gros Morne National Park selection for nation-wide pilot project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Norris Point, NL, June 30, 2022** - The partnership between Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative (AHOI), Gros Morne National Park (GMNP) and the Gros Morne Co-operating Association (GMCA) has been instrumental in reducing plastic waste, improving waste diversion and cleaning coastlines in the Gros Morne region, and people are noticing! The accomplishments and ongoing efforts to make Gros Morne plastic free have led to the selection of Gros Morne National Park for a nation-wide Parks Canada pilot project called, *Team Up and Clean Up the Shore*.

"Marine litter and plastic waste is an issue from coast to coast to coast, even in protected areas," says Julie LeBlanc, Acting Field Unit Superintendent. "Parks Canada wanted to develop a program where visitors and community members become citizen scientists. *Team up and clean up the shore* connects participants with shoreline conservation while gathering baseline data on marine litter and plastics. The information gathered will provide Parks Canada with more clarity on the extent of the issue and help to identify mitigation strategies."

AHOI and its partners are launching the second year of their partnership, [Becoming Plastic Waste Free Gros Morne](#) by introducing [Parks Canada's new self-guided shoreline cleanup kits](#), which visitors and residents can sign out and use at their leisure. These kits raise awareness of the impacts of marine litter and plastic pollution and encourage people to participate in protecting these areas from plastic's harmful effects.

The cleanup kits include a data sheet with clipboard, burlap bag, bucket, reusable/washable gloves, weight scale, and a first aid kit. The kits used in Gros Morne

are modeled after the national program kits, and include materials and cleanup procedures fine-tuned by AHOI, and used during the [2021 beach cleanups with GMNP and GMCA](#). This allows data collected as part of this national program to complement work that has already been established in Gros Morne.

“It’s not just about picking up trash and counting how much we collect; it’s also about knowing what we’re finding, where it’s coming from and how it’s getting there,” says Aaron Hingston, AHOI’s Waste Buster Team Leader. “Audits provide clues to where the waste is coming from and help us develop effective strategies to prevent plastics and other waste from ending up there in the future. We’re happy to see this being adopted in other places, since plastic and all trash migrates from one place to another, regardless of borders.”

“It’s on all of us to keep our coastal communities and natural areas clean. People visit our region because of its pristine environment, and the people and culture that have been shaped and sustained by it.” says Colleen Kennedy, GMCA Executive Director. “Now visitors of the park have the opportunity and tools to help preserve it on their own time; reducing the impacts plastic pollution has on this world-class destination, the place we call home.”

The new Parks Canada shoreline cleanup kits are available at the Shallow Bay campground, Green Point Campground, and the temporary visitor centre (31 Main St North) in Rocky Harbour, NL. The public can also take part in [any of the AHOI community beach cleanups happening throughout the Gros Morne region this summer!](#)

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## **BACKGROUND**

Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative is a registered non-profit organization formed in 2019. It aims to raise awareness of our changing oceans and facilitate actions to protect them and communities that depend on them most. AHOI works with local businesses, universities, government agencies and others, to create programs that support the health of our oceans, while working towards a more resilient and sustainable blue economy.

The partnership agreement, *Becoming Plastic Waste Free Gros Morne*, focuses on the Gros Morne region in and around the national park, and adjacent communities. The area encompasses a national park – also a UNESCO World Heritage Site - and 8 enclave communities with a combined population of approximately 3000 people. The region hosts roughly 250,000 visitors in a typical tourism season – a more than 8 thousand percent increase in people, from May to September. Along with beach cleanups and audits, the partnership also provides visitors with information on how to reduce their waste and single-use plastic (SUP) while visiting, help them access free, clean drinking water to refill reusable water bottles rather than buying SUP bottles, and makes waste diversion and sorting easier with proposed new signage for Gros Morne National Park.

[Previous beach cleanups](#), and research indicate that the majority of the waste ending up on Gros Morne beaches come from land-based sources in the local area. That means if we want to see a reduction in litter ending up in our environment, we have to make changes as a province and region, in such areas as waste management, education and infrastructure. *Becoming Plastic Waste Free Gros Morne* is helping to achieve that.