ATLANTIC HEALTHY
OCEANS INITIATIVE

Successful Start to
Plastic Waste Reduction in Gros Morne Region
Partners collect over 2 metric tons of garbage and clean nearly 12 km of coastline

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Norris Point, NL, October 18, 2021 - Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative (AHOI) and its partners, Parks Canada (PC) and the Gros Morne Co-operating Association (GMCA) have collected nearly 2200 lbs of waste and cleaned nearly 12,000 m of coastline in the Gros Morne region since beginning their partnership three months ago.

The partnership, "Becoming Plastic Waste Free in Gros Morne" encourages better practices and behaviors by the public, improves education and awareness of plastic waste issues, enhances the capacity to clean and audit beaches, and provides a better understanding of plastic pollution found along coastal areas of the region.

AHOI's Plastic Program Data Coordinators, Emily Walsh and Aaron Hingston – also known as the "AHOI Waste Busters" – were able to put a much larger dent in the amount of waste littering the region.

"We've collected nearly triple the amount of weight and covered almost five times the distance that we did last year," said Hingston. "We have found everything from microplastics to a goose decoy to couch cushions."

In three months, Walsh and Hingston conducted 20 quadrant samples in Gros Morne National Park and larger beach cleanups in each of the seven communities adjacent to the park. They had help from staff at AHOI, GMCA and Parks Canada, along with more than 150 community volunteers.

"To put it into perspective, the weight of waste we collected is equivalent to two moose, and the amount of rope collected is enough to stretch the length of 411 humpback whales," added Walsh.

"It's astonishing to see first-hand the amount of waste littering our coastlines," said GMCA's Executive Director, Colleen Kennedy, who has participated in the community beach cleanups. "To know this waste is turning up in areas that are protected or surrounded by otherwise pristine landscapes, underscores the importance of our partnership and the work we are doing."

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Nearly all the waste found along shores in the region comes from within the Gulf of St. Lawrence. To help reduce the amount of plastic that could end up on the landscape, the partners are developing initiatives to reduce the use of single-use plastics, and divert those used into the appropriate waste streams.

AHOI, Parks Canada and GMCA brought the Blue W program to the Gros Morne region, whereby visitors can refill their water bottles with safe drinking water for free, eliminating the need to buy single-use bottles. To date, the partners identified and registered six locations in the national park and seven throughout the communities. The partners are also working on new signage for waste and recycling bins in the region.

"Parks Canada protects Canada's natural and cultural treasures and is proud to work with partners and nearby communities to achieve its goals. Gros Morne National Park is a special place, and its protection is possible with the help of the passion of groups such as the Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative and the Gros Morne Co-operating Association. We are pleased with the results this partnership yielded in year one and look forward to continuing to work together to address waste management issues in the region," said Ron Hallman, the President & Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada.

While beach cleanups and audits have wrapped up for the season, the partners will continue working together to develop and introduce initiatives that bring the region closer to becoming plastic-waste free.

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