



COASTAL GEORGIA CIGARETTE LITTER PREVENTION EFFORT UNDERWAY

In an unprecedented effort, entities in Georgia's six coastal counties have joined together to battle the nation's number one most littered item: cigarette butts. Providing comprehensive coverage of Georgia's coastal area, Tybee Clean Beach Volunteers, the City of Tybee Island, Keep Savannah Beautiful, Keep McIntosh Beautiful, Keep Camden Beautiful, UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, Keep Golden Isles Beautiful, Keep Liberty Beautiful, Fort McCallister State Park and Crooked River State Park have united in a coast-wide cigarette litter awareness educational initiative: ***Georgia's Coast is Not an Ashtray.***

Made of cellulose acetate, a type of plastic, cigarette butts do not easily biodegrade. Discarded butts have a negative impact as land litter, but once blown into storm drains or tossed directly into water sources, this toxic litter becomes marine debris, leaching chemicals into marine and aquatic environments and potentially being ingested by those inhabitants. With coastal Georgia's proximity to the Atlantic Ocean as well as its abundance of streams, rivers, lakes, creeks, salt and freshwater marshes and ponds, the coast-wide initiative focuses on cigarette butts in relation to water bodies.

Funded by a \$15,000 Keep America Beautiful cigarette litter prevention program grant, the three-month initiative consists of cigarette waste receptacle and signage placement, radio public service announcements, social media promotion, educational video development, business signage placement, drink coaster outreach and pocket/car ash tray distribution. A total of 81 cigarette receptacles will be placed and educational outreach provided in public spaces near coastal water bodies of varying types.

During June, Keep McIntosh Beautiful will be installing 12 new cigarette receptacles in downtown Darien, at City Hall and the County Courthouse, and at public parks and marinas throughout McIntosh County.

While simultaneous project-specific outreach activities will occur in all six coastal counties during the June-August effort, community-specific outreach activities will be taking place.

"Keep McIntosh Beautiful is very pleased to be part of this coast-wide effort to bring awareness about the problem of cigarette litter," says KMB executive director Julie Sowell. "With so many different parts and activities spanning three months, we think this initiative can have a very positive impact on people's thinking and behavior toward cigarette waste."

