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**Environmental Nonprofit Tackles Local Trash Problem**

WILMINGTON, NC-December 6, 2022-For the last two years volunteers from a local nonprofit have conducted monthly cleanups along one of our county’s most littered roadways. Through NC’s Adopt-A-Highway program, Plastic Ocean Project (POP) has now officially “adopted” a 2-mile stretch of Hwy-421 that is frequently in need of TLC due to its proximity to the county landfill.

In addition to the usual stuff one expects such as plastic bottles, fast food cups and wrappers, other typically collected items are construction debris like metal flashing, large pieces of lumber and panels of sheetrock. There have been some challenging items as well. These have included rolls of carpet padding-still in their plastic packaging, the entire hood of a car and half of a semi-truck hood. POP’s director Bonnie Monteleone notes, “our county’s landfill is so awesome that they actually have a place for us to put wood and metal to recycle.”

Not only is litter unsightly it can also be hazardous for drivers. It also threatens livestock, wildlife, and marine life plus blocks storm drains, pollutes area creeks, streams, waterways and the Cape Fear River.

Elizabeth Wescott and her family own a nearby farm and popular wedding venue. She explains, “Grazing animals are apt to eat trash such as plastic grocery bags that when irresponsibly discarded make their way into livestock pastures and when eaten can result in bowel blockages and unexpected death. This is a costly and emotionally taxing burden for small farms.”

POP’s monthly cleanups began in 2020, and have yielded 7,595 pounds of trash from this 2-mile spot. Through the nCinco sponsored Trees4Trash program, the cleanup crews earn one tree for every 25 pounds of trash collected. After pickup, the bags of debris are taken back to POP’s headquarters where volunteers and student interns sort, recycle what they can and dispose of the rest.

Plastic Ocean Project has now committed to maintaining their designated area for the next 4 years. Their 1st official Adopt-A-Highway cleanup is set for this Sunday, December 11th, from 10am-1pm. Volunteers can drop in any time during those hours. All cleanup supplies are provided. To learn more about the Trees4Trash program or to volunteer, please visit [www.plasticoceanproject.org](http://www.plasticoceanproject.org) or sign up here: <https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MTcxNTQy>

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