



2024-2025 Litter Programs Annual Report

April 2025

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Introduction

In 2022, Dillon Consulting conducted a review of the litter programs. The evaluation highlighted issues that the NS Adopt-A-Highway Program Association was having with the delivery of the programs, including staffing issues and lack of capacity as well as problems with volunteer engagement. One of Dillon's key recommendations was to wind down the nonprofit organization and for Divert NS to take over program delivery in the interim (for the 2023 clean-up season) until an organization with adequate capacity can take over the delivery of the programs. In 2024, the programs were shifted to a new host organization: Coastal Action, a non-profit based out of Mahone Bay focused on environmental conservation research and education.

Another key recommendation from the 2022 Dillon Consulting report was to streamline the registration process. More specifically, it was recommended to change the permitting process, which was a primary source of frustration for roadway clean-up volunteers. In 2024, the Clean-up Permit was replaced by the Assumption of Risk Form, which includes all the key safety information laid out in the Clean-up Permit. The Assumption of Risk was added to the registration forms on the Adopt-A-Highway website, where volunteers can click agree to the form by clicking 'Yes – I accept the below Assumption of Risk Agreement' in the dropdown menu above the form. After registering, an email is sent to the Public Works Area Manager of the region the clean-up is registered in. The Area Manager retains the ability to cancel or reschedule the clean-up, but their approval/signature is not required for the clean-up to be completed.

Clean-up Data

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our many volunteers, 373 clean-ups were registered in our 2024 season by 279 different groups/individuals. Of these registered clean-ups, 215 clean-ups submitted data. 12 of these 219 clean-ups were large-scale clean-up events. 54 of the total clean-ups were registered by Adopt-A-Highway groups. We had two new groups adopt a section of roadway this year: Compass Minerals and Peggy's Cove Preservation Society.

Litter Programs 2024 Data Overview	
Total clean-ups registered	369 (315 PMU groups, 54 AAH groups)
Number of volunteers	7,049
Time spent cleaning up litter	988.25 hours
Distance of shoreline cleaned	16.5 km
Distance of roadway cleaned	766.85 km
Total garbage bags collected	4,486
Total recycling bags collected	704
Total weight of bags	108,930 lbs. OR 49,410 kg.

PMU vs. AAH Data Overview	
Average # of Volunteers in PMU Clean-ups (Without Large Community Groups)	20
Average # of Volunteers in PMU Clean-ups (With Large Community Groups)	33
Average # of Volunteers in AAH Clean-ups	15
Average Weight Collected per PMU Clean-up (Without Large Community Groups)	513 lbs. OR 233 kg.
Average Weight Collected per PMU Clean-up (With Large Community Groups)	775 lbs. OR 352 kg.
Average Amount of Litter per AAH Clean-up	416 lbs. OR 188 kg.

In addition to the number of bags collected and their weight, we also ask that volunteers report the most common brand names, most common items, and most unusual items that they picked up during their clean-up. The most reported brand names and items as well as the most unusual items (based on votes from the PAC) are listed below.

Most Reported Brand Names	Most Reported Litter Items	Most Unusual Litter Items Reported
Tim Hortons (81 reported)	Takeout cup (57 rep.)	Doll's head
McDonalds (29 reported)	Aluminum can (43 rep.)	\$20 bill
Budweiser (9 reported)	Fast food waste (38 rep.)	Starbucks overhead menu
Pepsi (10 reported)	Cigarette butt (35 rep.)	Kitchen sink
Dairy Queen (12 reported)	Snack/candy wrapper (24 rep.)	Motorcycle helmet

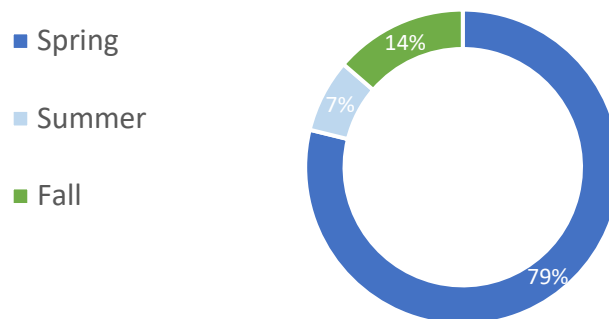
We appreciate all the volunteer groups that register for our programs. We would like to recognize the registered clean-up groups that completed the most clean-ups this year. These groups are listed below.

Clean-up Group Name	Number of Clean-ups Completed	Number of Volunteers	Weight of Bags Collected (lbs.)	County
2024 Go Clean Get Green	23	192	15,100	Pictou
East Hants Exit Ramp Challenge	18	104	1,631	East Hants
Colchester Clean 2024	15	887	10,000	Colchester
Nancy Comeau	7	14	750	Digby

This year, most clean-ups were registered during the spring season, as seen in the chart below. This is a common occurrence with our programs, as the accumulation of the winter's litter becomes apparent during the spring's snow melt. In addition, many groups, businesses, and

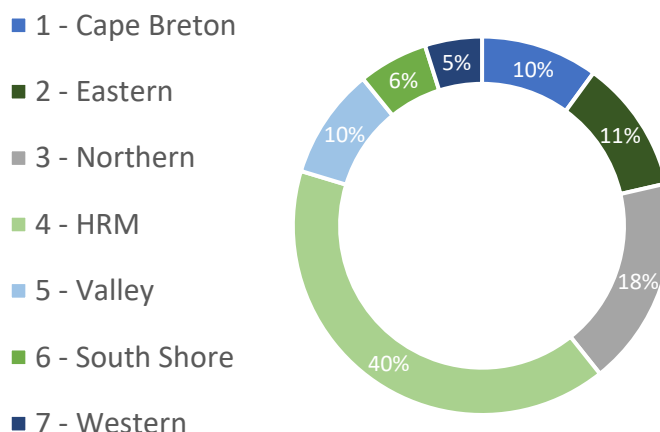
organizations plan clean-ups for Earth Day, which falls on April 22nd, a few weeks after our programs open for the season. Our registrations for the summer and fall seasons were lower than spring registrations but increased significantly compared to last year's registrations. Compared to last year's registrations, there was an increase from 9 to 28 in the summer season and 25 to 51 in the fall season. Our registrations for the spring increased from 258 in the 2023-24 season to 294 in the 2024-25 season.

Percentage of Total Clean-up Registrations by Season



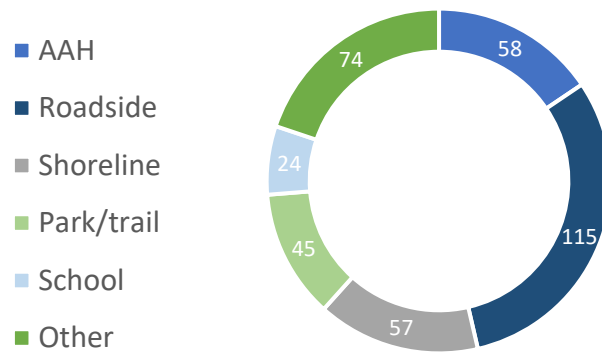
We also kept track of the number of clean-ups registered in each Solid Waste Region. As is the case in most years, HRM accounted for 40% of clean-ups this year, equal to 2023. Clean-ups took place across the province in each region. Congratulations, everyone on a job well done!

Number of Clean-up Registrations by Region



Another data point of note is the type of clean-up registered. Compared to the previous year's data, there were significant increases in all types of clean-ups except for roadway clean-ups (AAH, Roadside) which experienced small decreases in registrations. The 'Other' category experienced the greatest increase, from 8 in 2023 to 74 in 2024. This category often includes larger community clean-ups and other clean-ups that cover multiple types of terrain (e.g., roadsides and shorelines).

Number of Clean-ups per Type



Promotion and Awareness

In the summer of 2024, some updates were made to the nsadoptahighway.ca website.

Primarily, updates were made to the Adopt-A-Highway and Great NS Pick-Me-Up clean-up registration pages to include the new Assumption of Risk Form. Based on feedback from Public Works personnel and volunteers, this change has made the volunteer experience much more streamlined and efficient.

On our Instagram page (@nspickmeup), our social media account that receives the most traffic, we made 16 posts in 2024 which garnered 173 likes. In addition, our posts were shared by other accounts 29 times. The 2024 season also saw an increase in followers of this account – the account gained 22 followers, bringing it to 855 followers. On top of our interactions through social media, we also communicated with our volunteers through regular newsletters. Of the three newsletters sent out in the 2024 season, an average of 44.7% of our audience opened the email. The highest percentage of opens was our Season Preview 2024 newsletter at 45.3%. The most clicks on newsletter links were our Opening Day 2024 newsletter – with 12.3% clicking a link.

We attended various events throughout the 2024 season, including NSCC Sustainability Fair on March 7th, the Earth Weekend Community Clean-up in Yarmouth on April 20th, Open City on Agricola Street hosted by the North End Business Association on May 11th, an education session with the Hammonds Plains Girl Guides on May 13th, the Bluenose Marathon on May 17th, the Dynamite Trail outdoor trade show on June 4th. At these events, we interacted with many individuals, handing out Litter Programs merchandise, clean-up supplies, and info pamphlets.



Our litter programs coordinator, August MacLean, and another Coastal Action employee were featured in a video in a new Discovery Centre Halifax exhibit focused on marine plastic pollution: the Divert NS Ocean Action Zone. The exhibition, located in the Murphy Ocean Gallery, is funded by Divert NS and will be in place for the foreseeable future.

Coastal Action also did our own Adopt-A-Highway litter clean-ups in the spring and fall 2024 on Highway 3 between Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. Both clean-up events had a large turn-out of staff members – around 20 participants for each clean-up.

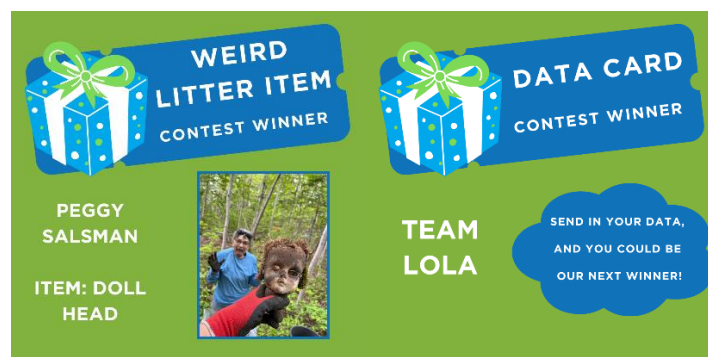
In lieu of a volunteer appreciation event, we have decided to recognize a few volunteers who went above and beyond in terms of pursuing the mission and goals of our litter programs. First, we awarded Luke MacDonald the Ambassador Award for his continuous dedication to completing clean-ups and championing litter reduction on social media. Second, we awarded Nancy Comeau the Volunteer of the Year Award for her tireless efforts in cleaning up her community and inspiring others to act. Third, we inducted the Alexander Family into our Hall of Fame for their decades-long commitment to the Adopt-A-Highway program and cleaning up litter in their community. Lastly, we recognized The Green Door as the Business of the Year for all the work that they do to factor sustainable waste management and litter reduction into their organizational strategies and goals. We also held contests throughout the season to show appreciation for volunteers. Below are the winners.

Spring Data Card Contest – Maple Ave Clean-up Crew

Spring Weird Litter Item Contest – East Coast Groundhogs (old love letter)

Fall Data Card Contest – Team Lola

Fall Weird Litter Item Contest – Peggy Salsman (doll head)



Program Advisory Committee Updates

In the 2024 season, there were three Program Advisory Committee meetings, each facilitated by the Litter Programs Coordinator. The purpose of these meetings was to gain insight from Committee members regarding potential changes to the programs as well as future delivery of the programs. The Program Advisory Committee has shifted towards the role of providing perspective on program-related decisions, rather than the Committee making the decisions. The Committee is very useful to the programs as it includes key stakeholders with years of industry experience with the litter programs. Below is the full list of current committee members.

<i>Organization/Individual</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Affiliation/Background</i>
Litter Programs Coordinator	Chair	Divert NS
Deborah Searle	Member	Pictou County Solid Waste
Kathryn Bremner	Member	Divert NS
Jeff Heyman	Member	NS Department of Public Works
Chelsey Schmuland	Member	Community member/business owner
Janice Marshall	Member	Community member/business owner
Jan Deveaux	Member	Sackville Lions Club
Meagan Wadden	Member	Halifax Solid Waste
Cyndi Fraser	Member	Halifax Solid Waste
Scotian Shores Beach and Shoreline Clean Up	Member	Scotian Shores Beach and Shoreline Clean Up
Nancy Veinot	Member	Long-time volunteer
Ken Lee	Member	NS Department of Environment and Climate Change
Donald MacQueen	Member	NS Department of Environment and Climate Change

Potential Future Changes/Goals

Based on recommendations made during the program review in 2022, Coastal Action and the Program Advisory Committee have been working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs. Below are updates on proposed changes:

- *Streamline the registration process.* Due to an aging population within Adopt-A-Highway Groups and frustrations surrounding permitting processes, the AAH program has experienced a steep decrease in the last few years. To address frustrations surrounding permitting, we have discussed switching from Clean-up Permits to Assumption of Risk forms, removing the need to obtain approval from a Public Works representative. This was implemented in summer 2024 and has received very positive feedback from both Public Works and program volunteers.
- *Host programs under Divert NS or other like-minded organization.* In 2024, the litter programs were transitioned to be hosted by Coastal Action, a non-profit environmental conservation organization based in Mahone Bay. The programs were highly successful in their first year with Coastal Action, and Coastal Action aims to take more steps to support the programs and situate them within the broader goals of their organization.
- *Using regional public libraries as a means of distributing supplies.* Libraries are accessible, central hubs in communities that have long opening hours. By using libraries, volunteers would not have to set up appointments with Public Works or Solid Waste to pick up supplies. To obtain supplies, they would travel to the library closest to them and grab a pre-packaged litter clean-up kit. By spring 2025, most regional libraries across the province have partnered with Solid Waste Regions to distribute supplies.
- *Separate large clean-up groups from smaller groups by providing the large groups with funding for their supplies.* This would ensure that Solid Waste Regions don't have to be constantly resupplied after large groups empty their stock of supplies. This was implemented in 2024 and seems to have reduced strain on some Solid Waste offices.