VolunteerCleanup.org
Post-Cleanup Debrief Conversation

**The following are guidelines only, to help you facilitate the post-cleanup educational conversation. This is not a script to be followed verbatim but rather a suggested outline/structure with some data points that I like to include that seem to resonate with volunteers.*

Main Objectives and Outline

1. Define the problem of marine debris
2. Quantify the problem so people know how bad it is
3. Discuss the common types of marine debris (plastics, cigarettes etc)
4. Explain where it is coming from, how it's entering our oceans and waterways
5. Discuss why this is problematic and the consequences.
6. Discuss potential solutions to reduce marine debris across these categories:
    - Consumer/Personal Responsibility
        - Include an overview of what people can do themselves (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose etc)
    - Government's role (infrastructure, legislation)
    - Business Responsibility
- Make it fun and engaging!

You can also use our tri-fold brochure it literally walks through all of those areas in that flow. Use it as a tool!

Marine Debris Talking Points/Post-Cleanup Debrief/Group Discussion

This is incredibly important. We want volunteers to leave with a better understanding of the problem, and takeaways about what they can do, not just to pick up trash and go home. The cleanup is not the solution, it's an experience that hopefully is eye-opening and educational and leads to behavior change or to more engagement in the issue. Below are suggestions, incorporate your own ideas, or use these below!

Ice Breaker Questions for Discussion:

- What are your reactions to what you saw today? What did you think? More or less than what you expected?
- What kind of weird things did you find?
- What kinds of items were the most common?
    - Go through the "Top 10" What will you find Poster, and ask group if they found each of those items

1.) Define the problem of marine debris

Marine debris is defined as any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes. Most if it is plastic!

2,) Quantify the problem so people know how bad it is:

- At our current rate, in 2050 the oceans will have more plastic than fish!
- There is a floating island of the trash, the pacific gyre that is twice the size of texas!
- NOAA estimates that there are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic in the ocean
    - That's more than stars in the galaxy
- For each person on earth, there are 21,000 pieces of plastic in the ocean!
- Local cleanups regularly remove an average of 200-300 pounds per cleanup
- On International Coastal Cleanup Day in Miami-Dade, each year we remove 15,000-20,000 pounds in a single day of service

3.) Common Types of Marine Debris (ask group again for the top common items)
What do these mostly have in common (straws, bottle caps, bottles, food wrappers,)
They are mostly all FOOD and BEVERAGE items:

- **Straws:** United States we go through 500,000 (1/2 billion straws each day!)
- **Plastic Bottles:** 60 million plastic bottles in landfills, incinerators or ocean each day!
- **Styrofoam** is particularly evil! It breaks down into tiny beads that are often mistaken for food by marine life and once it deteriorates it's difficult to remove.
- **Cigarette Butts:** Used to be #1 most littered item in the world and most commonly found item (now it's bottle caps) Contrary to popular belief they are not made of cotton or paper. They are PLASTIC and not biodegradable. If you smoke, or know someone who does, please do not throw your cigarette butts on the street!!!

4.)Where do you think this trash comes from and how did it get onto our shorelines?
80% of marine debris is from land based sources. That means it originated on land and found its way into our oceans and waterways. Only 20% comes from boaters or fishing and water based activities. And, it ALL comes from us! We create this pollution

- It often begins as street litter, and blows or flows into the storm drains and directly out to canals, into the bay and finally into the ocean – all waterways are connected and lead to the ocean!
- Even street litter far away from the ocean can become ocean trash.
- The tidal patterns deposit the marine debris onto our shorelines where at low-tide, we have the opportunity to gather it before it flows back out again.
- While the touristy beaches in our community are well maintained, shorelines on the bay that are rocky and have mangroves are especially problematic. Plastic bags, Styrofoam and other forms of marine debris gather, collect and get stuck in the rocks and mangroves and there are not always county or city resources for regular cleaning and rely on volunteers!
- Beach cleanups—trash you picked up is AFTER the county sweeps the beaches with sifters each morning!

5.) Why should we be concerned about this problem? What are the consequences?

- Impacts to marine life
    - 100% of seabirds are eating plastic
    - 50% of sea turtles are eating plastic
        - Who knows what sea turtles eat?
            - Jellyfish! That look like plastic bags when floating in the ocean
    - Other animals like sea lions, and dolphins get entangle in fishing nets and line
        - Most of the great pacific gyre trash is nets and lines from fishing industry
- Impacts to food supply/chain. If animals are eating this plastic and we eat food from the ocean, we could be eating it too!
- Marine debris threatens our tourism and real estate economies, the biggest economies in South Florida!
- Who knows when plastic was invented? invented WWII era and became commercially popular in the 70s. As it takes hundreds of years to break down, this means that all plastics ever made, unless incinerated are still on the planet today.
- **Bottom Line:** As a society, we rely too much on single use plastics and items of convenience. If we didn't use so much disposable plastic, we wouldn't have this problem.
- Additionally, our over reliance on single use plastics is contributing to sea level rise. Plastics are made by burning fossil fuels which release Co2 into the atmosphere which leads to climate change.

What should we do about this? (facilitate a conversation to get their ideas and provide your own)

- Cleanups are not the answer! Plastic will continue to enter our waters and each day wash up on shore with the tides
  The most important thing we can do to prevent marine debris is NOT TO LITTER. Dispose of trash properly
- **Simple things we can all do:** What changes can we make in our personal lives?
- REFUSE, Reduce, Reuse single use plastics. The new "r" is refuse. There is a reason why recycle is last in the RRR mantra, it's a last resort!
- The plastics recycling industry is in crisis. China not talking our stuff anymore. Recycling is a LAST resort. (explain in more detail if you can)
  Personal Responsibility: 3 easiest changes to make in your life!
    - Bring your own reusable bags to the store
    - Carry and refill a reusable water bottle – most schools, work places, gyms have water coolers or water fountains, our tap water is safe, it's tested daily!
    - Skip the straw when ordering a beverage at a bar or restaurant.
        - Simply tell the server "no straw please, I am protecting the oceans" #strawssuck! #stopsucking
        - Skip a straw, save a turtle!
- **Influence Others around you: Be an Activist and Advocate**!
    - What can your work place do to reduce single use plastics?
    - Ask restaurants you patronize to phase out Styrofoam in their to-go packaging and switch to more sustainable, environmentally friendly options.
    - Every kitchen in America has aluminum foil, highly recyclable and a great alternative to plastic or Styrofoam take out container. Ask kitchen to wrap your leftovers in aluminum instead!

    - Vote with our wallet, support companies that protect the environment, and follow sustainable business practices
    - **Teachers!** Educate others
    - Advocate and Vote for Candidates who support Clean Water policies!
- **Government Responsibility:**
    - Legislate and implement sensible policies, bans where appropriate
    - Infrastructure, well designed garbage cans that do not allow trash to blow out, recycling (notice that there are NO recycling bins in City of Miami parks
- **Business Responsibility:**
    - Restaurants and business owners to opt for environmentally friendly materials
    - Extended Producer Responsibility