



Spring cleaning the environment

PLASTICS SA is calling on South Africans to participate in the annual Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week from September 13 to 18. The week will once again culminate in National Recycling Day on September 17 and International Coastal Clean-Up Day/Let's Do It World Clean-up Day on September 18.

In addition to raising awareness and supporting clean-up initiatives by donating refuse bags, gloves and other equipment needed, this is the 25th year that Plastics SA is coordinating South Africa's participation in International Coastal Clean-Up Day, the world's biggest volunteer effort for ocean health.

'Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week has become a highlight on our country's environmental calendar. This annual public awareness week is supported by all the packaging streams and encourages citizens, corporates and municipalities to help remove all visible litter from their neighbourhoods and streets, rivers, streams, beaches and oceans,' explains Douw Steyn, Plastics SA's sustainability director.

Plastics SA hopes this year will see a repeat of last year's successes. 'Highlights from 2020 included the launch of the Inkwazi Isu (Fish Eagle Project) by the

KZN Marine Waste Network South Coast and the participation of Barbara Creecy, minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in a clean-up at Dakota beach in Umbogintwini, where 697 bags with a weight of over 2.4 tons were collected.

'Although Covid-19 restrictions prohibited large groups at public clean-ups, the spirit of camaraderie, positivity and willingness to make a difference in our environment made it one of the most memorable years,' adds Douw.

In the Cape Provinces, several hundreds of kilometres of the country's coastline were cleaned in more than 72 audited clean-ups, while several more non-audited, informal clean-ups took place during the week. Fifteen 4x4 clubs hosted events and several diving groups conducted underwater clean-ups. Twenty tons of litter were removed, separated and sent for recycling on International Coastal Clean-Up Day.

'We urge organisers planning community clean-ups to follow safety protocols by limiting the numbers of volunteers participating, ensuring that participants wear masks, checking that they maintain social distancing and that enough sanitising stations are in place,' Douw comments.