

Press release for immediate release

IT STARTS WITH ME:

SOUTH AFRICANS INVITED TO JOIN THE 30TH CLEAN-UP & RECYCLE SA WEEK

Plastics SA celebrates 30 years of inspiring South Africans to take action against litter

Johannesburg, 28 July 2026 – Every piece of litter picked up, every recyclable separated and every person who chooses not to litter is proof that meaningful environmental change starts with individual action.

That is the message behind Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week 2026, taking place from 14-20 September 2026, during which South Africans are once again encouraged to roll up their sleeves and take pride in the places where they live, work, learn and play.

This year's campaign carries the inspiring theme, "*It Starts With Me*," reminding every citizen that creating a cleaner South Africa begins with individual action.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Plastics SA coordinating this national environmental awareness campaign, which has mobilised hundreds of thousands of volunteers to remove litter from neighbourhoods, rivers, beaches and public spaces while promoting recycling and responsible waste management.

Today, the initiative has grown into one of South Africa's largest collaborative environmental campaigns, supported by the country's Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs), including Petco, Polyco, The Southern African Vinyls Association (SAVA), EWASA, MetPac-SA, Fibre Circle and The Glass Recycling Company, together with national and provincial government departments, municipalities, environmental NGOs, schools, community organisations and thousands of volunteers across the country. This broad partnership demonstrates that keeping South Africa clean is a shared responsibility that transcends industries, organisations and communities.

Throughout the month of September, clean-up activities will be taking place nationwide, with the main focus falling during Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week. To support these efforts, Plastics SA will once again distribute 500 000 of its iconic bright yellow clean-up bags to coordinators across South Africa, supporting thousands of volunteers taking part in organised clean-up activities across the country.

Explains Douw Steyn, Sustainability Director at Plastics SA: "The first Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week took place in 1996 and was built on the simple belief that ordinary South Africans could make an extraordinary difference simply by taking responsibility for the environment around them. Three decades later, that vision is stronger than ever. Every clean-up, every volunteer and every yellow bag filled represents someone who chose to be part of the solution. That is exactly what this year's theme, '*It Starts With Me*', is all about".

For more than three decades, the local plastics industry has encouraged South Africans to become active environmental custodians by participating in clean-up initiatives that remove litter before it reaches rivers, streams, beaches and ultimately the ocean.

Beyond improving the appearance of neighbourhoods, these clean-ups help protect wildlife, prevent blocked stormwater systems, reduce pollution and promote the responsible use and recycling of valuable materials. Litter that is left unmanaged can be carried by wind and rain into stormwater systems, rivers and eventually the ocean, making community clean-ups one of the simplest yet most effective ways of preventing environmental pollution at source.

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Key dates during Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week 2026

- National River Clean-Up Day – Wednesday, 16 September 2026
- National Recycling Day South Africa – Friday, 18 September 2026
- International Coastal Clean-Up Day – Saturday, 19 September 2026
- World Clean-Up Day – Sunday, 20 September 2026

Plastics SA is South Africa's national coordinator for the International Coastal Clean-Up, the world's largest volunteer effort for ocean health. The organisation is also an active member of the Let's Do It Foundation (the movement behind World Clean-Up Day) which works alongside the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to mobilise millions of volunteers worldwide to remove litter, raise awareness about waste pollution and inspire long-term behavioural change.

"Cleaning up the environment is only the beginning. Every clean-up starts conversations about recycling, responsible consumption and preventing litter in the first place. When communities come together, they don't just remove waste. They build community pride, strengthen neighbourhoods and inspire others to do the same. Real environmental change starts with individual choices, and those choices spread from one person to another," says Steyn, highlighting that their active involvement in these campaigns is about far more than simply collecting litter.

The organisers are encouraging schools, businesses, community organisations, municipalities, environmental groups and individuals to either participate in an existing clean-up or organise one of their own. Information about registered clean-up coordinators across South Africa is available at www.cleanupandrecycle.co.za and www.plasticsinfo.co.za. Members of the public are encouraged to contact the coordinator nearest to them to join an existing clean-up, or to register and organise one of their own.

Whether you can spare an hour or an entire day, your contribution matters.
Because a cleaner South Africa doesn't begin with someone else.

It starts with me. It starts with you. It starts with all of us

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About Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week

Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week is South Africa's annual national environmental awareness campaign coordinated by Plastics SA in partnership with the country's Producer Responsibility Organisations, government departments, municipalities, NGOs and industry partners. The campaign promotes responsible waste management, recycling and active citizen participation in keeping South Africa's communities, rivers and coastline clean for future generations.