

Famed Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Stems the Tide of Glove Waste Through The RightCycle Program



The Challenge



The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) is the world's leading, independent nonprofit organization dedicated to ocean research, exploration, and education. Its researchers teamed up with French scientists in 1985 to discover the Titanic, and the organization remains at the forefront of providing essential knowledge about our oceans and atmosphere that helps guide global environmental stewardship.

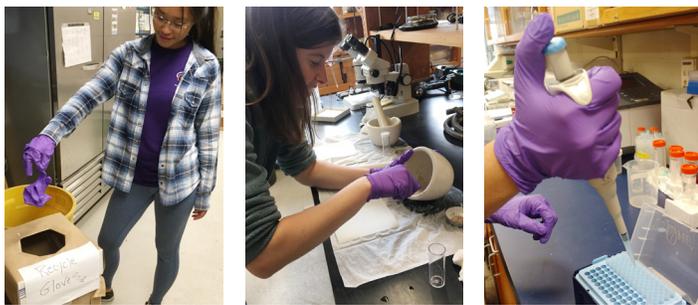
Located on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, WHOI is committed to the principles of sustainability throughout the world and within its own research facilities. Its Sustainability Task Force advocates for sustainability initiatives within the WHOI community. Its goal: to integrate sustainable practices and resource conservation in research, education, and operations to reduce human impact on the environment.

As part of this effort, the task force is committed to reducing the amount of waste that WHOI generates. An obvious target was the high volume of nitrile gloves used in its labs. The question was could they be recycled and, if so, how? The answer was yes – through The RightCycle Program.

The Solution



In 2015, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution began recycling its used nitrile gloves through RightCycle® by Kimberly-



Clark Professional, the first large-scale recycling initiative for non-hazardous lab, cleanroom, and industrial waste. The program turns used Kimberly-Clark Professional nitrile gloves, single-use apparel, and safety eyewear into new consumer goods. It has helped customers divert more than 660 tons of waste from landfills since its inception in 2011.



"Our scientists study microplastics in the ocean, so we want to divert as much plastic as possible," said Stephanie Madsen, sustainability coordinator for WHOI. "Reducing our impact on the planet and the ocean is important. RightCycle has made it very easy for us to divert gloves from our waste stream."

The Result



WHOI now diverts hundreds of pounds of nitrile glove waste from the landfill each year. The impact of the program has been far reaching, due in large part to Madsen's commitment to spreading the word beyond WHOI's facilities.

She created a robust website for the glove recycling effort that can be easily adapted for use by other organizations. "I'm happy to pay it forward and assist other people," Madsen said. "It might take a little more time during the day, but if I'm helping to reduce plastics that could end up in landfills or the ocean, it's worth it."

Another plus for WHOI is the homegrown nature of The RightCycle Program. Used gloves are sent to domestic recyclers and transformed into flowerpots, shelves, and other products by U.S. manufacturers.

And not to be overlooked is the impact of the program on WHOI's own employees.

"Our researchers study the ocean and climate change. They want to minimize the amount of waste that they generate," she said. "They are glad that we offer it."



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