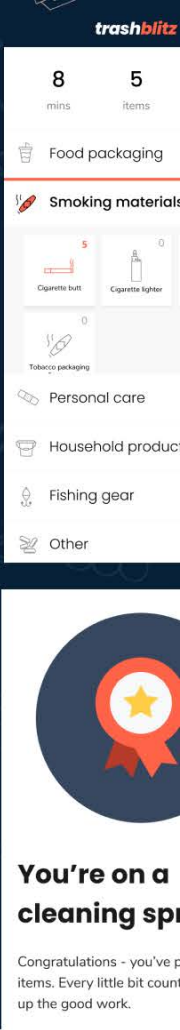
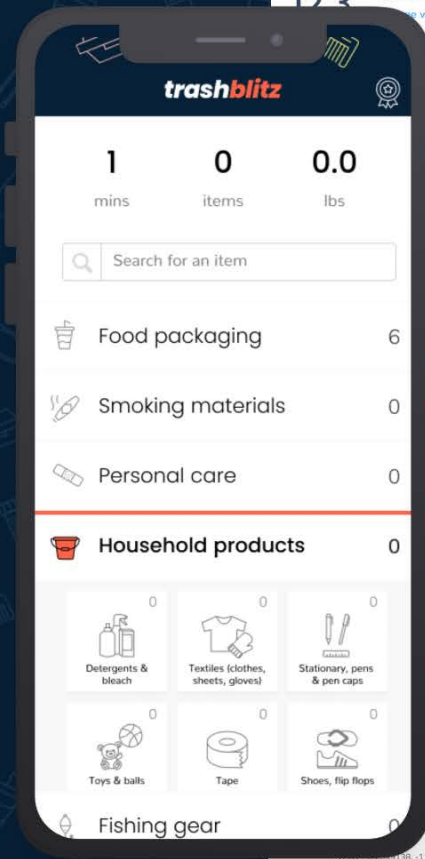


**trashblitz**  
POWERED BY 5GYRES

| Tag trash for policy change



## Project Goals

TrashBlitz is a community based project designed to engage local stakeholders in measuring plastic pollution and other trash across their city - from shorelines to riverbeds to urban neighborhoods - and utilizing the data to generate a relevant action-plan for their city. TrashBlitz provides robust research protocols and a web based app that both measures problem products and brands, and a platform to bring diverse stakeholders together to co-create solutions, to stop plastic pollution at the source.

5 Gyres launched TrashBlitz in Los Angeles on April 20, 2019, mobilizing hundreds of Angelenos in collecting information on urban waste - categorized by type, material and brand - across the LA watershed. Volunteers from neighborhoods across LA helped collect the data, sampling over the course of three weeks in 120 randomly selected sampling points across LA's 15 City Council districts. The findings, which are designed to be open source (highlights below) show a clear and immediate need to push for policy change that centers around source reduction, including through legislation like AB 1080 and SB 54.



## Project Challenges

While ample evidence of the global plastic pollution problem exists, having local data specific to neighborhoods is a powerful way to engage stakeholders and policymakers. The TrashBlitz platform helps to tell the story for local leaders of what's in our backyard, and how can we use this data to solve specific problems.



**17,216**

Total number of items picked up



**Marlboro**

Most picked up brand



**Cigarette butts**

Most picked up item

## The Methodology

Utilizing modern technologies, we created a web-based application that could be accessed via mobile to better suit the evolving role of computer based data collection of today. Access through TrashBlitz.org allows users to input trash data as they are collecting it in real time, generating higher quality data and more accurate reporting.

The TrashBlitz data card and web based app ([trashblitz.org/methodology](https://trashblitz.org/methodology)) aligns with global NGOs, like Surfrider, to measure plastic pollution and give municipalities, business leaders, and the public, the data they need to generate solutions based on their communities' key problems or pain points. This allows us to scale TrashBlitz methods to any city and any watershed across the globe.

We modeled our data collection protocols to align with global standards developed by the UN GESAMP (Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection), a working group 5 Gyres participated in that arose from a need to better harmonize global methods. Having contributed to the GESAMP report, we adapted the linear transects for beaches and riverbanks to roadsides in the urban setting.



**If one man's trash is  
another man's treasure,  
then one industry's  
potential failure is  
another's opportunity**

**Adam Lashinsky**



## The Community Approach

After completing data collection at 110 sampling sites throughout the city, we invited the participants, partners, local legislators and businesses to come together to analyze the results and discuss how we can turn that data into actionable solutions. Attendees got a summary of the results and we then had everyone breakout into groups to further delve into specific barriers and discuss how to overcome their assigned barrier so as to get to a zero waste LA by identifying challenges and opportunities. This exercise illuminated where the community felt there was a need for additional work and where there were missed opportunities and intersections.

The trainings, data sampling days and Solutions Summit allowed people an opportunity to join the plastic pollution movement. The coalition that was formed was primarily made up of organizations that were already doing work in the space, however this also provided an opportunity

to reach out to other organizations and individuals who weren't actively doing work to combat plastic pollution. As the movement as a whole shifts it's messaging to include the entire life cycle of plastic, these new partnerships will be key to make sure the movement and solutions are inclusive of organizations and communities who are disproportionately impacted by the often-hidden impacts of plastic.

### Participating organizations:

The 5 Gyres Institute, Greenpeace, Heal the Bay, Friends of the LA River, Surfrider-Long Beach, Surfrider-Los Angeles, Algalita Marine Research and Education, The Bay Foundation, Sierra Club, Loyola Marymount University, Treepeople, Team Marine, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Padres Pioneros, Pacoima Beautiful, Climate Reality Project, Lonely Whale, Azul, LA Maritime Institute, Adventures in Waste, El Nido, Plastic Pollution Coalition, Global Green, The Ace Hotel, Snap (Snapchat), WeWork (The We Company)

**Total top 20  
Items**

items	count	percent
cigarette butts	4,024	25.45%
misc plastic fragment	2,979	18.84%
food wrapper	1,773	11.21%
bottle caps and rings	1,338	8.46%
misc plastic foam	1,084	6.85%
cup	883	5.58%
straws	598	3.78%
misc plastic film	458	2.89%
lids	408	2.58%
other bags	345	2.18%
stationary, pens, caps	313	2.18%
tobacco packaging/wrap	280	1.98%
beverage bottles	227	1.43%
take-out food containers	225	1.42%
other bottles	180	1.13%
pieces (newsprint, etc)	173	1.09%
sachet	160	1.01%
forks, knives, spoons	134	0.84%
textiles, clothes, gloves	121	0.76%
strapping bands	105	0.66%

**Food/beverage related:  
Packaging**

material	count	percent
plastic	11,852	68.84%
paper	4,018	23.33%
metal	397	2.30%
glass	271	1.57%
foam	229	1.33%
other	213	1.23%
fabric	98	0.56%
cardboard	85	0.49%
chemicals	19	0.11%
rubber	18	0.10%
wood	16	0.09%

**Top 5 Brands**



**17,216**  
Pieces of trash picked up

## Feedback

Despite the abundance of national trash datasets, we have seen firsthand the value of having regional datasets showing legislators and local businesses the most prevalent and polluting items in their community. Many Angelenos are looking for a way to engage in this particular issue and TrashBlitz has provided that entry point. We will continue to leverage this data to engage participants, partners, legislators and local businesses through the TrashBlitz LA coalition and use the data collected to push for and support changes throughout our city, county, state and beyond.

When we surveyed participants, 100% of those surveyed reported that they are likely to learn more about plastic pollution, refuse single use plastic items or bring their own reusables. 89% of those surveyed reported they would take further action and call their representatives in support of waste reduction policy, vote with their dollar and "avoid purchasing polluting products/support businesses working on reducing waste" and become a 5 Gyres ambassador or join a local organization fighting plastic pollution.

## The identified barriers to solutions on plastic pollution fell into 4 major categories:

- 1 Public sector** - the need for more education and outreach was a consistent theme. There was also a lot of discussion around the need for a culture change in regards to plastic and its perceived innocuousness and convenience.
- 2 Policy change** - policy was always an important factor when designing the TrashBlitz LA study design. As referenced above, our goal was to be able to provide council or region-specific data for inland communities that are often lacking this data. Policy efforts would encourage reduction of throwaway plastics and would target fast moving consumer goods by supporting comprehensive reduction ordinances, extended producer responsibility, minimum recycled content and the like.
- 3 Innovation** - technology played a part in the data gathering process but how can technology continue to play a part in the solution? Deposit schemes, QR codes and packaging innovation were discussed.
- 4 Social Justice** - from lack of proper waste infrastructure to lack of access (to nature, outreach, resources, decision makers, etc) this was a crosscutting theme that was felt from the data collection process to the Solutions Summit and beyond.