



INTERNATIONAL TRASH TRAP NETWORK

Ocean Conservancy

University of Toronto Trash Team

TRASH TRAP SIMPLE DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Purpose: This protocol describes a harmonized procedure to document the weight of trash (i.e., plastics and other anthropogenic litter) collected by trash traps around the world.

If you have a cellphone or tablet, download the [Clean Swell App](#) to easily record your trash trapping data and submit to the ITTN.

Technical Notes:

- Please contact info@trashtrapnetwork.org with any questions regarding this protocol.
- This protocol is intended to be used and adapted for all types of trash traps. If you have questions, the ITTN would be happy to advise on how to adapt these methods to your program.
- We do not expect to see animals in a trash trap, but if you find any live animals in your trash trap, safely place them back into the water. Please record any biota captured (alive or dead) with your data and if possible, include the species and count. If you encounter this more than once, consider adaptations that could be made to avoid negative impacts to aquatic organisms, for example, moving your trash trap to a different location.
- If you are characterizing debris from trash traps at different sites, please ensure to thoroughly wash your fieldwork materials between sites to avoid introducing any non-native plants or spreading invasive species from one location to another.

Safety Notes:

- If near a waterbody, wear a lifejacket prior to retrieving your trash trap.
- Check if a power source needs to be switched off prior to collecting debris from the trash trap. If the power is left on, this may damage the device.
- Follow all guidance provided from device manufacturers for safe trash trap and debris retrieval. This may require additional equipment to the items recommended in this protocol.

If dangerous items are found, dispose of these with care, e.g., place in a labelled sharps container and safely store for proper disposal.

Materials:

SAFETY EQUIPMENT		
Item	Recommended Materials	Notes
Life jacket	No specific type required	Not required if trash trap is on land
Gloves	Gardening or dishwashing gloves	Strong and reusable to enable protection from sharp debris
Weather precautions	Sunscreen, water, hat, sunglasses	
Sharps Container	No specific type required	Any plastic container with a secure lid. Must be clearly labelled as 'Sharps'
First Aid Kit	No specific type required	

WASTE CHARACTERIZATION MATERIALS

Item	Recommended Materials	Notes
Copy of simple protocol	Available at https://oceanconservancy.org/ittn	
Camera	No specific type required	To visually document trash collected
Clean Swell App	Download on Apple Store or Google Play https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/cleanswell/	
Trash scale	Luggage or fish scale e.g. https://www.walmart.com/ip/N1-Digital-Hanging-Luggage-Scale-Portable-Handheld-Baggage-Scale-88-Pounds-2-Pack-New/377710866	For trash that can be measured by hand
Bag or container	No specific type required	Large and strong enough to hold debris for weighing

PAPER DATASHEET RECORDING

Item	Recommended Materials	Notes
Clipboard	No specific type required	
Paper datasheet	Available at https://oceanconservancy.org/ittn ; print on waterproof paper	
Pencil/Pen	No specific type required	

Procedure:

- 1) Record your group name, trash trap ID, type of trash trap, and data collection details (simple data and collection of macrodebris (>2.5 cm) and/or microdebris (<2.5 cm)).
- 2) Record the number of people reporting data, date of debris collection, length of time trapping trash, type of environment, location of device, and if there was a rainfall event (>10 mm) since the last time the trap was emptied.
- 3) Record if you are weighing trash and organic debris together or not. If you are weighing these together, record an estimate by mass of the percentage of debris that is organics. Note – organics are typically much heavier than plastic debris and thus this estimate can be tricky to guess using visual cues only. To inform your estimate, we recommend weighing the debris and organics separately at least once to get an idea of what the organics in your trap typically weigh.
- 4) If weighing the contents of your trash trap in a bag or container, record the weight of the empty bag/container first. If you are not weighing debris in a container, or if you are taring your container before weighing debris, put 0 for 'weight of empty container'.
- 5) Record if you are weighing a subsample of the debris removed. If you are subsampling, estimate the approximate percentage of debris subsampled.
- 6) Record the weight of debris and the unit of measurement (lb or kg).
- 7) Return the trash trap to its deployment or storage location.
- 8) Dispose of the debris according to your local regulations, organizational goals or priorities for ecosystem health. For example, you may dispose of all debris into the garbage, or choose to separate out recyclables and/or organic matter to dispose of these separately.

If you are using a paper datasheet, submit this to info@trashtrapnetwork.org to share your data with the ITTN.