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More Ideas, Less Waste

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## Earth Action: Protect Parks From Plastic Pollution



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

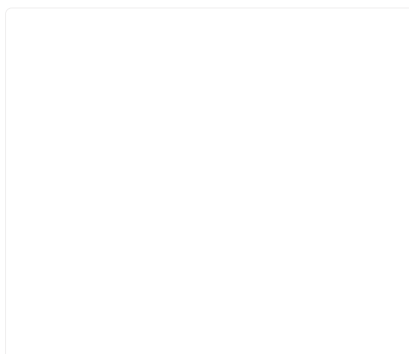
○ AUG 5, 2022   [citizen science](#), [earth action](#), [national](#)

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Earth Day is on April 22, but we shouldn't limit our action for the planet to one day in April. Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week from Earth Day 2022 to Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to **invest in the Earth** and make your own life more sustainable.

To address the serious environmental problems posed by plastic we should all be investing in a **post-plastic world**. A critical component of this process is **breaking free of plastic**



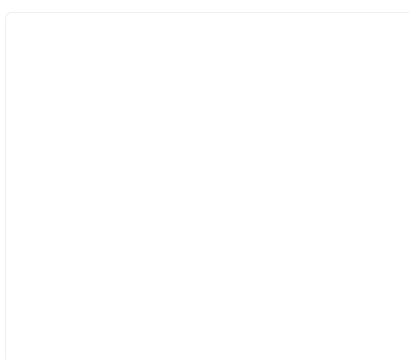
What Do You Think? ⋮

**Are you considering moving because of climate change?**

- No
- Yes
- I'm researching my options to decide

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**pollution.** But as they say in the business world, “What gets measured gets done.” **Citizen science** projects help environmentalists quantify the problems. This week, you can invest in the Earth by collecting data on plastic pollution in national parks.

## Action: Participate in the Plastic-Free Parks TrashBlitz

(Para obtener información en español, visita:

[actionnetwork.org/events/plasticfreeparkstrashblitz](https://actionnetwork.org/events/plasticfreeparkstrashblitz))

### Plastic Problems in the Parks

Our national parks are meant to be protected from pollution and development in order to preserve some of the most beautiful landscapes of our nation as truly natural areas. But in 2018, **a study** of tidal areas in 35 national parks found **microplastics** in every single sample. Plastic is not just a problem in aquatic areas. No matter how far inland, plastic pollution eventually **finds its way to the sea**. And there is a lot of plastic pollution in the national parks. More than **300 million people** visit them each year. These visits generate **nearly 80,000 tons** of municipal solid waste – much of it plastic.

This year, on World Oceans Day, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland called for the department to **phase out single-use plastic** products and packaging from 480 million acres of federally managed lands, with a goal of eliminating the purchase, sale, and distribution of such products completely by 2032.

### TrashBlitz

TrashBlitz is a campaign of **The 5 Gyres Institute**, a nonprofit working to eliminate plastic pollution through research that enables data-driven environmental solutions. From now through September, they are mobilizing volunteers to document plastic pollution at U.S. National Parks using the **TrashBlitz app**.

This fall the data will be included in a report that will reveal the materials, items, and brands of waste found in national parks. These results will be used to inform future legislation to keep single-use plastic out of protected spaces. It will also be used to lobby members of Congress to support the **Reducing Waste in National Parks Act** that was reintroduced by Representative Quigley (D-IL) last fall.

To participate, **register online** and download the TrashBlitz app. Then visit any national park between now and the end of

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September and spend some time picking up trash that you record in the app. You will automatically get an email with your raw data, and receive a copy of the final report when it's published this fall. You will also be entered to win an America the Beautiful National Parks Pass and two tickets to Jack Johnson's "All at Once" concert in Los Angeles on October 1.

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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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