

World Rivers Day 2020 — Let's Close the Tap

On September 27, [World Rivers Day 2020](#), communities worldwide are holding events for cleanup, education or just plain outdoor fun. Whatever the case, the message is the same: we must find innovative solutions for keeping our rivers healthy and sustainable for future generations.

The plastics industry should play a big role in these discussions. After all, microplastics are increasingly entering our oceans through land and marine sources. It is estimated that [nearly 10 million metric tons](#) of plastic end up in oceans each year. In 2016 [the World Economic Forum predicted](#) that by 2050 our oceans could have more plastic than fish!

Cleaning up those plastics is a challenge. Oceans are vast, stretching millions of square kilometres and flowing in all directions.

The good news is there are ways to “[Close the Tap](#)” on plastics flowing into the oceans. “Closing the tap” requires cleaning up the plastics currently in the ocean while preventing any new plastics from flowing in our waterways.

In many ways, it starts with rivers.

It Starts with Rivers

Here's an interesting fact — most plastics enter the ocean through rivers. In countries such as [Haiti](#), discarded water bottles and other plastics inevitably make their way into the canals or waterways where they flow toward the Caribbean Sea. [The Ocean Cleanup](#), an innovative organization working on cleaning the oceans of plastics, says 80 percent of ocean plastics came from only 1,000 rivers.

World Rivers Day events will discuss the range of potential solutions — prevention, diversion, education, cleanup, recycling and building Closed Loop systems.

There are many opportunities to dive in and start collecting plastic debris. [Oceanworks](#) identified key points where it's possible to divert plastics before they reach the ocean.

Ocean-Bound – Collecting plastics within 50 km of the shoreline in a country where waste management programs are still being developed

Waterway – Collecting plastics found in rivers and canals flowing to the sea

Coastal – Collecting plastics on beaches and coastlines

Near-shore — Collecting material suspended in the shallow or adjacent areas of the ocean that are close but not accumulating on the shoreline

Of course, stopping the flow before it even starts with pre-consumer and post-consumer product recycling is the ideal solution.

Cleaning the Rivers

[The Ocean Cleanup \(OC\)](#) is working to clean both [oceans](#) and [rivers](#) of the post-consumer plastics.

Recognizing that most plastics enter oceans through rivers, the OC is prioritizing the world's 1,000 most-polluted rivers and making a plan to rid those rivers of plastic debris within the next five years.

They've developed an innovative technology — “[The Interceptor](#)” — a unique collection vehicle nicknamed “the garbage truck for our waterways.” Deployed into rivers, the Interceptor extends a long barrier that collects the debris and directs it into the containers. The debris is automatically sorted then eventually delivered to a nearby barge.

The Interceptor's work is entirely automated, powered by solar energy and monitored by operators using wireless communications.

A New Era — The Closed Loop

Cleaning our rivers and oceans is a top priority. Our communities, governments and industries must do more and do better.

While all cleanup efforts are valuable, the best solution is preventing plastics from entering the water in the first place.

Plastics recovered from oceans and rivers can be a gift to our environment and economy. Once collected, those post-consumer plastics can be recycled and reintroduced into the economy as new, long-term products.

That is why developing and perfecting the [Closed Loop](#) is the top priority for society. A Closed Loop diverts plastics from landfills through a circular ecosystem. When plastic products reach the end of their useful lives, they're recycled to create resins for new products.

In some ways, it's not even recycling. It's simply an innovative way to make plastics — using old plastics!

In a perfect Closed Loop, [recycled plastics](#) are remade as the same product. The best example is Lavergne's work with HP on its ink cartridges. Used HP ink cartridges are returned to HP Planet Partners for recycling then Lavergne processes the plastic into resins that can be used as raw material to make new [HP cartridges](#).

Participate in World Rivers Day 2020

Check the World Rivers Day website at www.worldriversday.com to find an event in your community.

Let's make 2020 the beginning of a new era for our planet.