



**Contact:**

Heather Smith

Grand Traverse Bay **WATERKEEPER**®

231.935.1514 x3

[hsmith@gtbay.org](mailto:hsmith@gtbay.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE WATERSHED CENTER ANNOUNCES BEACH CLEANUP APRIL 27, 2024**

The Watershed Center to Compliment Volunteer Action by Deploying Innovative Technology

Traverse City, MI, April 10, 2024 – [The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay](#) is hosting a volunteer beach cleanup on Saturday, April 27, 2024, at 1pm at the Volleyball/West End Beach in Traverse City. Through a partnership with the [Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup](#) and generous funding and support provided by Midwest retailer Meijer, The Watershed Center will deploy a robotic litter prevention device called a BeBot to compliment volunteer beach cleanup efforts. This event is free and open to the public with no registration necessary. All cleanup supplies will be provided, though attendees are encouraged to bring their own buckets.

Each year 22 million pounds of plastics enter the Great Lakes and pose a tremendous threat to the 40 million people that depend on the Great Lakes as a drinking water source and the hundreds of native species that live in and rely on the lakes. “Plastic debris eventually breaks down into microplastics that bioaccumulate in fish and wildlife and attract toxic chemicals such as PCBs that bind to plastic surfaces when present in water,” said Grand Traverse Bay **WATERKEEPER**® Heather Smith. “By removing trash along our shorelines, we are preventing man-made products such as plastics and other synthetic litter from threatening our drinking water and the health of fish and wildlife.”

Along with education aimed at heightening individual awareness and action, the deployment of innovative technology is an important step in cleaning up the waterways of the Great Lakes. In 2022, Meijer donated \$1 million to the [Council of the Great Lakes Region’s](#) charitable arm to clean up Midwestern beaches and waterways with the purchase and use of BeBots and PixieDrones. The BeBot is a 100% electric, eco-friendly beach cleaning robot that mechanically sifts sand to remove plastic waste and other debris. The PixieDrone is a floating, remote-controlled waste collector that targets floating waste in all forms (organic, plastic, glass, metal, paper, rubber, etc.).



In 2024, The Watershed Center will continue to deploy the BeBot and PixieDrone at beaches and marinas along Grand Traverse Bay. The debris collected is analyzed and categorized and valuable data is gleaned to help inform scientific research, educational materials, and policy development. In 2023, an average of 600 pieces of debris were collected at each beach cleanup event; plastic fragments, cigarette butts, and paper/cardboard were the top items collected.

Since 2022, Meijer has participated in the [Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup](#) program with the use of the two innovative technologies. The Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, a joint effort between [Pollution Probe](#) and the bi-national Council of the Great Lakes Region, is a first-of-its kind initiative using innovative technology to quickly remove plastics at numerous sites across the region.

“The opportunity to work with The Watershed Center to expand the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup to the United States, thanks to funding from Meijer, is an exciting partnership,” said Mark Fisher, President and CEO, Council of the Great Lakes Region. “Through this collaboration, we are able to capture and cleanup more plastic litter in the Great Lakes, as well as educate coastal communities about how we can work together to reduce, reuse, and recycle material waste.”

For more information about this volunteer beach cleanup event, visit [www.gtbay.org/beach-cleanups](http://www.gtbay.org/beach-cleanups).

###

### **About The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay**

The Watershed Center is a Michigan-based non-profit organization that advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve its watershed. The Watershed Center blends scientific and policy expertise with education, advocacy, collaboration, and solution-oriented actions to serve as a multi-faceted resource for the community. The Watershed Center engages people in ways that increase knowledge, enjoyment, pride, and informed decision-making around water. For additional information, please visit <https://www.gtbay.org>.

### **About Council of the Great Lakes Region**

The Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) is a binational network of organizations comprised of the Council of the Great Lakes Region USA, an Ohio-based trade association; the CGLR Foundation, an Ohio-based public charity; and the Council of the Great Lakes Region Canada, a not-for-profit corporation. Together, these organizations, collectively referred to as the Council of the Great Lakes Region, are leading a new era of economic growth, environmental



protection, and individual well-being by building the region's long-term competitiveness and sustainability today. For additional information, please visit <https://councilgreatlakesregion.org>.

#### **About the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup**

The Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, an initiative of the Council of the Great Lakes Region and Pollution Probe with support from a network of funders and collaborators, uses innovative plastic capture technology to quickly capture and remove plastics and other litter from Lake Ontario to Lake Superior and everywhere in between and is one of the largest initiatives of its kind in the world. Through research, outreach, and education, the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup is gathering data on litter entering our waterways and identifying how government, industry, and consumers can work together to reduce, reuse, and recycle material waste. For additional information, please visit <http://www.greatlakesplasticcleanup.org>.

#### **About Pollution Probe**

Pollution Probe is Canada's longest-standing environmental organization, pursuing environmental gains by working productively with governments, industry, and the public, with a steadfast commitment to Clean Air, Clean Water, and a Healthy Planet. Pollution Probe engages people as thinkers to nurture and act on areas of consensus. For additional information, please visit <https://www.pollutionprobe.org>.