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Call Out for Volunteers to Cleanup Great Barrier

Kiwi NGO Sustainable Coastlines seeks help to cleanup the west coast of Aotea/Great Barrier Island on the 6th and 7th of March.

Most of us think of "The Barrier" as a pristine location and on the surface it is, but last year, the group removed 2.8 tonnes of rubbish from the uninhabited stretches of coastline that face Auckland City.

They are working closely with the Sir Peter Blake Trust, with whom they are bringing out 400 children from low decile schools of the region on Fullers Ferries' big 'Superflyte' boat, to experience a day on the island and participate in a coastal cleanup.

The following day, they will again head out, with a mix of volunteers from throughout the community, who will tackle the coastlines on foot, by kayak and on boats.

As in 2009, all the rubbish collected will be audited, which will provide valuable information about what is turning up on "The Barrier's" shores annually. "The huge majority of the rubbish out here comes from the storm drains of Auckland and blows across the Hauraki Gulf in the prevailing sou-westerly winds," says Sam Judd, co-founder of Sustainable Coastlines, "we are bringing people out from the city to enjoy the island and also give something back, to a place of significant natural value to the region."

The response they have had so far has been outstanding, with the support from the local community flowing in (despite their lack of fault in the matter) and significant support pledged by the Burnsco Marine, Sanford's Sustainable Seafood, the Federation of Commercial Fishermen, the Police, The Coastguard and Surf Life Saving Northern Region.

The organisation's main aim is to reduce the occurrence of marine debris and change the way we think about plastic: "people don't realise that when they drop a wrapper on the street, it ends up affecting important ecosystems such as Aotea/Great Barrier Island," says Judd, "by coordinating such a massive effort in a beautiful place, we can address the issue as a team and inspire people to take action on their own behalf in the future by having a fun weekend away."

For full details of the event and to book your return tickets on the ferry, for \$50 per person, go to www.sustainablecoastlines.org.

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