



Thistle Nationals 2024
Tom's River Yacht Club
August 4-10, 2024



Best Practice 1: Eliminate Single-Use Water Bottles and Provide Water Refill Stations

Toms River Yacht Club had multiple refill stations for water bottles and even installed one by the Jr Sailing center complete with fresh ice every day. They also offered water refill on a Race Committee boat.

Best Practice 2: Eliminate Plastic Straws

Efforts were made to reduce the use of plastic straws and stirrers, including providing wooden stirrers with morning coffee, and pitchers of water, glasses and no straws at each table at the awards banquet.



Best Practice 3:

Serve Food with Plastic-Free Dinnerware

Toms River went above and beyond by purchasing Compostable dining products and using green bags. The bar and keg used green cups and even allowed drinks to be made in reusable cups provided by competitors. They also readily accommodated those who brought their own reusable dinnerware, including plates & silverware for the meals and cups at the bar. The banquet hall provided water at every table to help eliminate the use of plastic cups.



Best Practice 4: Skip Bags or Go Reusable

Our Nationals team provided cotton bags to the competitors (NJ has a ban on plastic bags so these are useful for shopping and many competitors were tremendously appreciative of the bags as they used them at the store). We also provided a reusable cooler and dry bag to use in the boats.

The following advertising was included in the 10-day countdown of things participants needed to know:

- “With this spirit in mind, one extra thing you should be aware of is that the state of New Jersey has a ban on single-use plastic bags. Which means you should be sure to bring reusable bags with you, because you'll need them when you go grocery shopping or run out to a big-box store for supplies. Slight inconvenience for shoppers, HUGELY beneficial for our storm drains, trees and bushes, wildlife, waterways, and anywhere plastic bags have traditionally gotten caught up and made a mess of things. And the key is not just remembering to have the bags in your car, but also *actually* bringing them into the store. (Us New Jerseyans have had a couple years of "d'oh!" moments to finally get into that habit.)”

Best Practice 5: Award Practical Items or Use a Perpetual or Upcycled Trophy

Our Nationals trophy presentation included giving "Sea Bags" to the Women's and Junior winners which were made from recycled sails. We also had a used sail drive to repurpose old sails into something useful. Perpetual trophies were given out but the Thistle Class has developed a system where those eligible for keepers could request them if desired, thereby reducing waste by not producing unwanted trophies, and consolidating multiple wins by one team onto a single trophy.



Photo courtesy of Frank Parisi

Best Practice 6: Publicize Your Sustainability Efforts

Communication always included Clean Regatta information. This was especially effective in the emails, and also by the display of the Sailors for the Sea Clean Regatta logo with the regatta name on the TCA web calendar page. Information on Clean Regattas was also presented by Green Team Members during the competitors meeting.

Best Practice 7: Involve Local Organizations

TRYC engaged other local sailing clubs to provide adequate support boats. This allowed TRYC to host this level of event without buying additional RC boats. Surplus food was donated to JBJ Soul Kitchen, which feeds people regardless of their ability to pay. Also, kids from TRYC's Junior Sailing Program helped with collecting compostables.



Best Practice 8: Post Educational and Reusable Signage

Educational signage regarding the environmental benefits of non-toxic boat soap and reef-safe sunscreen were displayed at registration.

Best Practice 9: Serve Local Food or Source Seafood Sustainably

Oyster Night was a huge success and the oysters were grown locally by our own Scott Lennox. The shells were collected and reused. TRYC Shopped locally for their salads and watermelon. The pizza guys used local ingredients and so did the Mexican event. Salads were from a local farmers market as was the watermelon.



Best Practice 10: Organize a Green Team

With Carol Kitchin doing the heavy lifting as Chairperson, Clean Class Committee Members Joy Martin and Cairn Krafft helping out with planning and Trudy Hudson helping out on-site, this one was covered. Plus, TRYC staff and volunteers who helped could also be considered part of the broader green team.

Best Practice 12: Divert Food Waste from the Landfill

Food leftovers were kept out of the landfill using multiple methods that included offering leftovers for lunch the next day, and unopened pans of food were donated to JBJ Soul Kitchen, which feeds people regardless of their ability to pay. TRYC made a great effort to buy compostable dinnerware and green bags to collect the compostables in.



Best Practice 13:

Use Paperless Event Management

All aspects of the regatta were paperless. We didn't hand out paper instructions and did most of the communication via WhatsApp and the regatta site.

Best Practice 14:

Host a Beach or Marina Cleanup

“Kids Camp” had 31 Children in attendance. They had a presentation about recycling and Compostable materials and did a daily grounds clean-up. After dinner, the older kids helped with clean-up of the regatta site and collected items based on their proper receptacle (recyclable cans and bottles, compostable material, and landfill waste).

Best Practice 14: Host a Beach or Marina Cleanup



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"I started off by showing my water bottle and asked what it was. They all knew it was my water bottle. I said it was refillable and reusable, so an item that could be used over many times until it breaks. It was better than a single use bottle because I wasn't using more plastic to have a drink of water every day...I then showed them a piece of sisal line that was made from plants. I explained that it was made from something that grew like food in a garden and then made into what we used it for. I also mentioned food and trees as being "biodegradable" which means it was made from something that came from the earth and could sit on the ground and become soil again. Food scraps and paper can break down in the dirt and become more soil, so those items are compostable. We have special plates and cups that are compostable and should be placed in the green compost bags with food scraps to be composted. At dinner we should be able to take our plate with all the scraps on it and just throw it into the green compost bin.

Then we described what we were going to look for outside on the TRYC grounds. When we found something that didn't belong on the ground, we would use the grabber sticks to pick up the trash and place it in a bag to throw away in the trash bins. The next day I also showed the kids how to place their hand outside the plastic bag and pick up trash without touching it with their hands directly. And we always washed our hands when we returned from picking up the grounds.

I tried to make the explanation simple for the kids to understand. They caught on quickly and had a great time looking for trash. It was like a treasure hunt and competition of who could fill their bag the most."

Quote from Green Team and Clean Class Committee Member Trudy Hudson

Best Practice 15:

Promote Alternative Transportation

Lots of carpooling was done since things were so close. Also, some participants commuted via bicycle.

Best Practice 16: Increase Awareness of

Wildlife and Habitat Protection

Education within the Kids Camp included information about blue crabs and seagulls. Educational signage and communication about/free samples of non-toxic boat soap and reef-safe sunscreen included in the registration packet helped promote protection of aquatic wildlife.

Best Practice 17: Offer Vegetarian or Vegan Alternatives

Every meal offered delicious vegetarian or vegan choices.

Best Practice 18: Use Eco-Smart Management Techniques

The Yacht Club had a pre-regatta discussion on using boats from local clubs and turning off engines when possible on the water.

Best Practice 19:

Prevent Toxins from Entering the Water

Samples of non-toxic boat soap and reef-safe sunscreen were included in the registration packets, and educational signage was displayed at registration. Two of our sponsors were Harken Derm which provided reef-safe sunscreen and Ditec which provided non-toxic boat soap which the competitors were encouraged to use prior to launching their boats into Barnegat Bay to prevent contamination from other waters.



Best Practice 20: Encourage Green Boating

A sail drive was held to help keep old sails out of the landfill and get them upcycled into beautiful and useful Sea Bags products. Efforts on all of the other Best Practices also produce a ripple effect that fans out into other boating in participants' lives and beyond.



