

Friends of Casco Bay / Casco Baykeeper  
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### **Trash and Syringes Tarnish Portland's "Necklace of Green"**

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PORTLAND—in the late 1800s, Portland's Back Cove was conceived as a "pleasure basin" by the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Today, this watery pearl in Olmsted's "Necklace of Green" is tarnished by trash.

Friends of Casco Bay organized a clean up of Back Cove with environmental engineers, public relations professionals, and other staff members of CONTECH Stormwater Solutions, a company that produces products to reduce stormwater runoff. They saw firsthand what ends up on our coastal shoreline from stormwater runoff and discharges from combined sewer overflows.

In less than two hours, they collected 15 bags of trash, including a hubcap, a Halloween mask, a hardcover copy of *The DaVinci Code*, and a dozen syringes from the shoreline below the parking lot by Back Cove. Portland Public Works Department had provided Peter Milholland, volunteer coordinator for the environmental group, Friends of Casco Bay, with tools to pick up and dispose of medical wastes. When the volunteers located a syringe, they marked the site with a flag and yellow tape; only one member of the clean-up crew was allowed to pick up the syringes.

Shortly after the Patriots Day storm, a clean-up by Friends of Casco Bay, the Back Cove Neighborhood Association, and Portland Trails found a similar number of syringes. City engineer Brad Roland suspects that the syringes were probably flushed down toilets and were washed into Back Cove through nearby combined sewer overflows during a heavy

rain. He said he didn't think that the syringes came from anyone with persistent medical conditions, such as diabetes, as they are normally well educated in how to properly dispose of medical wastes. The Public Works Department cautions anyone who finds a syringe not to pick it up themselves.

Since 1989, Friends of Casco Bay has been working to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay through advocacy, education, collaborative partnerships, water quality monitoring, and other scientific research. FMI, visit [www.cascobay.org](http://www.cascobay.org).

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Photo: Staff members of CONTECH Stormwater Solutions help Friends of Casco Bay pick up trash during a coastal cleanup of Back Cove, Portland.