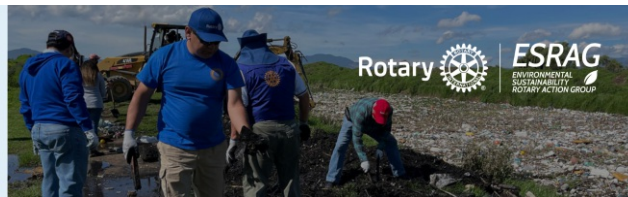


Pollution is personal, preventable, and solvable

In this issue, we explore how pollution, one of the UN's three planetary crises, is more than an environmental issue. It's a health issue, a justice issue, and a local issue that affects us all. But pollution is also where we can make real, tangible progress right now. Whether through plastics reduction, clean cooking, empowering women, or smarter event planning, Rotary clubs are already pioneering solutions that protect both people and planet. Dive into this month's newsletter to be inspired by fellow Rotarians, learn from global innovators, and discover how your club can take the next step toward a cleaner, healthier world.

- Why Pollution?
- Solving the Plastics Puzzle: What You Can Do with ESRAG's Plastics Solutions Task Force
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ECO ACTION NEWS



Why Pollution?

As the world grapples with the growing urgency of the climate crisis, it's easy to focus solely on carbon emissions. But what if the key to protecting our climate, safeguarding biodiversity, and promoting human health lies in addressing something even more visible and immediate, pollution?

Pollution is more than an eyesore or inconvenience. It's a deadly threat that affects air, water, soil, and every form of life. From toxic waste in our rivers to plastic choking our oceans, pollution disrupts ecosystems, worsens inequality, and accelerates global warming. It's no surprise that the United Nations includes pollution as one of the Triple Planetary Crises, alongside climate change and biodiversity loss.

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Solving the Plastics Puzzle

Why Focus on Plastics?

- Plastic production is booming, expected to triple by 2060 if we don't intervene.
- 91% of plastic waste isn't recycled, it ends up in landfills, incinerators, or the environment.
- Plastics contribute to climate change, as they're derived from fossil fuels and release emissions at every stage of their lifecycle.
- Microplastics are now found in our bodies, oceans, air, and even the most remote corners of the Earth.

This global crisis demands local action, and Rotary clubs are well-positioned to lead.

What You Can Do with ESRAG's Plastics Solutions Task Force?

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Nourishing Conversations for Healthier People and Planet: Reflections on RICON 2025



By Ashlyn J. Anderson

What is the role of Rotarians and Rotaractors in addressing climate change and malnutrition; two of the greatest challenges to sustainable development? Reflecting on this pressing question & values of Leadership, I am reminded of the powerful dialogues that took place to explore these topics at the Rotary International Convention (RICON) 2025 in Calgary Canada. As an early career professional passionate about nutrition and sustainability, attending RICON 2025 was more than a milestone—it was a transformative experience that reaffirmed the power of community, dialogue, and action in shaping a healthier future for people and the planet.

A Global Gathering for Local Impact

RICON 2025 brought together thousands of Rotarians, partners, and changemakers from around the world, including a group from my home District 6760 covering middle and west Tennessee, USA. The energy was palpable, the conversations inspiring, and the commitment to service unwavering. Among the many booths in the House of Friendship, one space stood out as a beacon of environmental leadership: the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG).

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Spotlight on Pollution: ESRAG Leads the Way at RICON

By Laurie Zuckerman

At the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, ESRAG sparked global momentum in the fight against pollution. Our presence—strategically located alongside [EndPlasticSoup](#), drew Rotarians from every corner of the world, all eager to tackle one of our planet's most urgent challenges.

From the outset, our team sprang into action, designing educational handouts, curating compelling displays, and preparing a standout “Build a Better World” workshop. The result? A vibrant environmental hub packed with nonstop engagement and heartfelt conversations.

The back-to-back presentations at our shared ESRAG/EndPlasticSoup space captured steady attention. People stayed, listened, and left energized to act. The buzz was undeniable: volunteers' passion was contagious, and the message resonated, pollution is solvable, and Rotary is leading the way.

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Projects

To inspire and take action



Empowering Women, Protecting the Planet: A Circular Solution for Tea Workers in South India

Women of the Nilgiris West Rotary Club in South India are having huge success with a solid waste reduction program that's helping local and migrant workers save money, while enhancing local Fair Trade tea brands' reputation with faraway consumers. The project is flourishing because Rotarians are paying close attention to the needs both of workers and of the firms who employ them.

"Tea here in the Western Ghats is harvested both by local people and migrants from the north," explains ecologist Meenakshi (Mna) Venkataraman, one of the Rotary women leading the project. The companies have set up schools and housing for the workers, as the estates employ them throughout the year.



"But hygiene is a huge problem," Mna adds. The workers — mainly women — put in eight-hour shifts on the mountain relying on chemical toilets, far from any public garbage collection systems. The women use disposable sanitary napkins, which are not only expensive, but also create a public health hazard whether they are burned (releasing dioxins), or whether they go into streams or dumps, where they become a source of infection. Dumps have increasingly caused problems as human populations expand into formerly remote areas in India, attracting wild animals who forage there for food and come into conflict with humans.

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Cooking Up Clean Solutions: ESRAG's™ Fight Against Pollution Through Cleaner Stoves



Across the globe, 2.3 billion people still rely on open fires or traditional stoves for cooking, a practice that's not only inefficient but also one of the world's most dangerous sources of household air pollution. Every year, this invisible threat contributes to millions of premature deaths, especially among women and children. But there's hope, and Rotarians are helping lead the way.

ESRAG's™ Clean Cooking Task Force is tackling this challenge head-on, turning smoky kitchens into spaces of safety, health, and sustainability. Through clean cookstove projects, Rotary clubs are helping reduce indoor air pollution, protect forests, and empower communities with cleaner, more efficient technologies.

Why Clean Cooking Matters for Pollution and People

[Read More](#)

Let's talk about "factory farming"



By Dawn Angela Byford and Kris Cameron

"The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" - Jeremy Bentham, 18th century English philosopher

As Rotarians dedicated to peace, compassion, and service above self, we strive to make choices that reflect care for others and the planet. One of the most urgent but often overlooked issues affecting human and environmental health, animal welfare, and the future of our food systems is factory farming" also known as industrial animal agriculture.

Imagine spending your entire life confined to a [space so tight](#) that you can barely move, on a wire or concrete surface. You are forced to live in your own waste, the fumes from which burn your eyes, nose, and skin. Your body is repeatedly poked, prodded, cut, and burned" without any pain relief. If you are sick, injured, or no longer deemed productive, you are cast aside to die as part of the 5-10% of "acceptable waste." For those who survive these harsh conditions, the first and only time they breathe fresh air or see the sky is when they are packed into a truck without food or water, exposed to weather extremes, for a long journey to slaughter. This marks the unnaturally short and tragic lives of billions of animals trapped in the industrial animal agriculture or "factory farm" system each year. [Read More](#)

Why Tracking Climate Project Data Matters and How You Can Help

Rotarians around the world are leading incredible environmental projects—planting trees, building clean cookstoves, installing solar panels, reducing plastic waste, and more. But how do we know what kind of impact we’re having? How can we measure progress, identify what works, and inspire others to take action?

That’s where **data** comes in.

Tracking and sharing the outcomes of our environmental efforts is critical for a few key reasons:

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Events
Save the Date

MAGIC ALL AROUND
21-25 JUNE 2025 • CALGARY, CANADA
Register today at convention.rotary.org

Rotary  

Join the Plastic Café: Rotary’s Global Conversation on Plastic Solutions



Every Third Thursday of the Month

How can we turn the plastic problem into a powerful opportunity for environmental action? That’s exactly what we explore at ESRAC’s monthly Plastic Cafés, a welcoming, solutions-focused virtual space where Rotarians and friends around the world come together to share ideas, learn from one another, and take action on plastic waste.

Hosted by ESRAC’s Plastic Solutions Task Force, the Plastic Café aligns directly with Rotary’s commitment to the circular economy, an approach that reduces waste, keeps materials in use, and regenerates natural systems. Instead of plastic ending up in landfills or oceans, the circular model encourages rethinking, redesigning, and reusing. Our monthly gatherings help people and clubs find their place in this movement, whether through local education, advocacy, or hands-on projects.

Each café features guest speakers, project showcases, and lively discussion on topics ranging from plastic bans and recycling innovations to microplastic education and creative community solutions. It’s a perfect place to meet other Rotarians passionate about the environment, and to discover simple ways your club can help close the loop on plastic pollution.

When: Every third Thursday of the month

Where: Online (free, but registration required)

Who: Open to all Rotarians, Rotaractors, and allies

Ready to be part of the solution?

[Register and learn more.](#)

Let’s rethink plastic together, and turn waste into lasting impact.

How Every Event Can Inspire Environmental Action



Rotary events are powerful moments for learning, networking, and impact, but they can also generate a surprising amount of waste. That's why ESRAG created the [Green Events Handbook](#), a practical step-by-step guide to help Rotary Clubs and Districts plan and host environmentally responsible events.

Whether you're organizing a local meeting, a district conference, or an international convention, this handbook empowers you to minimize environmental harm while maximizing community benefit. You'll learn how to plan for sustainable venue selection, reduce single-use plastics, serve climate-friendly meals, encourage public transit, and even calculate and offset your carbon emissions.

[Read More](#)



Weekly Seminars

September 10: Naturally Integrated Microplastic Obliteration (NIMO) with Elsabe Falkson and students, Lujain Khalil and Sophie Yao

NIMO is an AI-powered, IoT-enabled robot that detects, analyzes, and filters microplastics from water. Using infrared spectrophotometry and autonomous navigation, it scans and removes pollutants, protecting ecosystems with its built-in filtration system. [Register.](#)

September 17: Carbon Reduction Evaluation Methodologies with Mike Hatfield

StoveTeam International has spent the past five years working to quantify the reduction of carbon dioxide resulting from its stove projects in Central America. While primarily following Verra's methodologies, STI has closely monitored the progress of all four major methodology developers. [Register.](#)

October 1: Tapping the power of food to confront climate change with Mike Hoffmann

Food connects us all, personal, cultural, and essential. Yet climate change is transforming what we eat. By telling this story, we make climate change relevant to everyone, using the power of food to inspire action without the usual doom and gloom. [Register.](#)

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The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG) operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.