

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Listen to the marmot – new ads ask drivers to keep Washington litter-free

38 million pounds of litter is dropped on Washington roads each year

OLYMPIA – This March, Washington is rolling out new commercials as part of the *We Keep WA Litter Free* campaign, reminding residents that preventing litter starts with everyday choices and that keeping our state clean takes all of us.

The Washington Department of Ecology’s new ads focus on the split-second decision people make when they’re about to litter, especially when no one else is around. The commercials feature a marmot puppet that plays the part of our conscience, turning that inner voice into something you can actually see.

The marmot, Washington’s official endemic mammal, shows up in those everyday moments to deliver a simple message: littering is still a choice, even when no one is watching.

“To change behavior, we have to reach people before litter hits the ground,” said Amber Smith Ecology’s statewide litter prevention coordinator. “This campaign brings those everyday moments to life and reminds us to listen to that inner voice that tells us to do the right thing. Even when no one else is around, our choices matter. Small decisions each day add up to a cleaner state we can all be proud to call home.”

Washington addresses litter in two ways: prevention and pickup. Although picking up litter seems like the most direct way to tackle litter, Ecology’s Smith says that this isn’t a problem we can fix on the side of the road.

In 2025, Ecology and WSDOT invested more than \$17 million in litter cleanup efforts statewide. While 2025 collection totals are still being finalized, in 2024 paid crews and volunteers removed more than 6.2 million pounds of litter and cleaned over 19,000 miles of roadway.

The pickup numbers are big, but they’re still just a fraction of the *38 million pounds* that gets littered each year along roads and in public areas. That’s about 5 pounds of litter for every single resident of our state.

“Our litter crews and volunteers work hard to keep our roads clean, but we need every driver and every passenger to do their part – we all have a role to play in protecting our state’s natural beauty and environment,” Smith said.

A [2022 statewide litter study](#) found the most commonly littered items in Washington include cigarette butts, food wrappers and snack bags, glass bottles, and construction and demolition debris. The state plans to conduct a new litter study in 2026 to measure progress and guide future prevention and cleanup efforts.

The campaign includes partnerships with minor league baseball teams, including the Spokane Indians, Everett AquaSox, and Tri-City Dust Devils. Fans at select games this spring can take home a free reusable car litter bag. Keeping a bag in your car is a simple tool to prevent trash from building up in vehicles and ending up alongside roadways.

To learn more about this campaign, visit LitterFreeWA.org or PorUnWAlmpeccable.org.

More information

- To lend a hand cleaning up roadside litter, please visit WSDOT’s [Adopt-a-Highway volunteer program webpage](#).
- To learn more about Ecology’s litter pick up and prevention programs, please visit the [Litter in Washington webpage](#).
- Photography and facts about littering is available in the [media kit](#).

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