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TOP STORY

environment

Nurdle Patrol uses funds from Formosa settlement to distribute plastic pellet collection kits

By Kali Venable | kvenable@vicad.com

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April Tover, a citizen scientist, holds a vial of plastic pellets collected as part of the Nurdle Patrol project.

Contributed photo

Projects funded by
Matagorda Bay

More than 1.4 million plastic pellets have been collected in
U.S. waterways since the citizen-led Nurdle Patrol project

Mitigation Trust

The \$50 million Formosa settlement has been allocated to the following projects:

- \$20 million to create a cooperative for revitalizing depleted marine ecosystems and developing sustainable fishing, shrimping and oyster harvesting.
- \$11.25 million to the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust, which is established in the settlement to research, protect and restore water bodies and surrounding ecosystems.
- \$10 million for development of Green Lake Park into an environmentally sound public park.
- \$2 million to control erosion and restore beaches at Magnolia Beach.
- \$5 million for environmental research of San Antonio and Matagorda Bay systems and river deltas that feed into them.
- \$1 million to support the Nurdle Patrol project and give scholarships to people to attend plastic pollution conferences.
- \$750,000 to the Port Lavaca YMCA to host camps for children to learn how to be good stewards of the local marine environment.

started in 2018.

About 1 million of them were picked up in August alone after an estimated 743 million plastic pellets, commonly called ‘nurdles,’ [spilled from a cargo ship](#) on the Mississippi River in New Orleans.

“One person collected 500,000 in 20 minutes,” said Jace Tunnell, founder of the [Nurdle Patrol](#) and director of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute’s Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve. “There has been a crew going out almost daily to collect data on the river.”

With funds from the [Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust](#), the Nurdle Patrol is promoting plastic pellet collection by giving away kits that organizations, schools, groups or individuals can use to collect, remove and document microplastic pollution in their communities.

“We’re trying to make this to where it’s not a University of Texas project and these organizations can make this their own project,” Tunnell said. “They would get their own citizen scientists together all around the country to solve the problem themselves in their own areas, and we would be there for support.”

The [Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust](#) was formed last February as part of a [\\$50 million settlement](#) in a 2017 lawsuit the San Antonio Bay Waterkeepers brought against

Interested in getting a nurdle kit?

To inquire about receiving a Nurdle Patrol collection kit, contact Jace Tunnell at jace@utexas.edu.

Formosa Plastic Corps., which was [found in violation](#) of the Clean Waters Act for discharging plastic pellets into waterways from its Point Comfort facility.


The trust manages and distributes the \$50 million, of which the Nurdle Patrol will receive \$1 million over the course of five years.

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Clock starts ticking in Formosa lawsuit settlement (w/video)

Nurdle Patrol Startup Kits Available



- Federal judge approves unprecedented \$50 million settlement in Formosa Plastics lawsuit
- Formosa agrees to \$50 million settlement and zero discharge of plastic pellets
- Formosa fined for environmental violations
- Some residents remain frustrated about Formosa's pellet pollution

Kits include a duffle bag filled with 100 glass vials, tweezers, a field notebook, educational materials and promotional merchandise to help market the community-led projects.



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To receive a kit, each organization must commit to sampling at least one location monthly, add the data into [NurdlePatrol.org](#) and allow Nurdle Patrol to feature them as a partner.

The data that the Nurdle Patrol collects can by used at the

state or federal level to advocate for policy changes that prevent plastic pellets from getting into the environment. In each community, the data can also be provided to local officials to bring awareness to a plastic pollution issue and foster local solutions.

Using mitigation funds, the Nurdle Patrol also hired a new assistant who is putting the kits together and shipping them to partners. About 80 organizations have signed up. Tunnell hopes to add 100-120 new partners each year.

“A lot of groups want to get citizen-science projects going but don’t know where to start,” he said. “This is the perfect opportunity for that.”

Kali Venable is an investigative and environmental reporter for the Victoria Advocate. She can be reached at 361-580-6558 or at kvenable@vicad.com.



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Investigative & Environmental Reporter

"I am a Houston native and 5th generation Texan, with a degree in journalism and minor in creative writing from the University of Texas at Austin. I care deeply about public interests and the community I serve."