

When It Rains on Your Parade

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Immersive Professional Learning Deliverable

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This spring, I worked as a Marine Fellow with WildAid, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that works to stop illegal wildlife trafficking by reducing the demand for wildlife products. As WildAid's Marine Fellow, I developed a new community outreach plan for the WildAid Marine Program. In an effort to increase awareness of WildAid's growing Marine Program, I designed and implemented a community outreach strategy for the San Francisco Bay Area that focuses on hands-on, educational, ocean-focused events, such as beach clean-ups, movie nights, and expert lectures.

Our kickoff event was scheduled to take place at the end of April 2018. WildAid would host their first-ever Beach Cleanup Bash in partnership with the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and Surfrider Foundation's San Francisco Chapter. The Beach Cleanup Bash would offer local WildAid supporters, as well as other community members, a fun-filled day of service and ocean conservation education. Attendees would lend a hand to help keep the beach environment healthy and clean with a beach cleanup at Ocean Beach in San Francisco, CA.

After the beach cleanup, local ocean conservation experts would give short, educational presentations about the importance of marine protected areas and the role they play in protecting endangered marine species. The afternoon would end with a bonfire and social hour.

After nearly a month and a half of planning, it was time for the Beach Cleanup Bash. Supplies were packed and ready to go, food was ordered, attendees were excited. And then, the weather shifted. It's a terrible but undeniable truth: you can't control the weather. After all our preparation and planning, a storm rolled into San Francisco the weekend of the Beach Cleanup Bash. Gray skies, gusting winds, rain forced us to cancel.



Event planning, at times an exciting and creative process, can also be incredibly frustrating and disappointing. There are so many elements of an event, especially an outdoor event, that are simply out of your control. My experience developing a new community outreach plan with WildAid taught me the importance of flexibility and patience. Thankfully, due to our partners' flexibility, the Beach Cleanup Bash has been rescheduled for a weekend in June. WildAid will also host a ocean conservation documentary screening in June. In the fall, WildAid will participate in Sharktober Fest, with the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, as well host a Wildlife Ranger Appreciation Event and Supply Drive. Working with the WildAid Marine program was a wonderful opportunity for me to strengthen my community outreach and event planning skills, as well as build meaningful relationships between WildAid and other local nonprofit organizations.