

Meijer is First Retailer to Unveil Beach and Water Cleaning Drones in the Great Lakes in Partnership with the Council of the Great Lakes Region

Effort launches retailer's participation in the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup Program

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Aug. 25, 2022 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Midwest retailer Meijer is launching its participation in the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup Program with the use of two innovative technologies – the [BeBot and Pixie Drone](#) – to clean up Midwestern beaches and waterways in partnership with the Council of the Great Lakes Region.

This initiative is supporting the single largest deployment of these types of eco-friendly and remote-controlled devices across multiple states in the Great Lakes, which encompass the largest surface freshwater system in the world.

"It is a privilege to live near the Great Lakes, which inherently comes with the responsibility to protect them," Meijer President & CEO Rick Keyes said. "Contributing to the conservation of these invaluable waterways is important to the wellbeing of our ecosystems, economy, and the communities we serve. Meijer has a strong history of environmental stewardship, and we're pleased to partner with the CGLR because the impact these initiatives will make will ultimately benefit generations to come."

Beginning this month, Meijer and the CGLR will lead cleanup projects at busy beaches, marinas and waterways in Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin in partnership with a variety of community, state and environmental NGO partners. The retailer kicked off its efforts with a press conference at Pere Marquette Beach in Muskegon earlier this week that included a live demonstration of the innovative equipment:

- **BeBot:** An eco-friendly, remote-controlled electric (solar and battery powered) beach cleaning robot – that cleans 32,000-square-feet per hour. It rakes through the sand without altering the beach environment, and collects plastic litter and other waste – bottles, cans, food wrappers, cigarette butts – in a basket for disposal and recycling.
- **Pixie Drone:** An eco-friendly, remote-controlled water drone – that can collect up to 200 pounds of material per use – will navigate through marinas and other waterways to collect plastic litter and other waste debris floating on the surface of the water. It will also collect other water data, such as temperature, pH, salinity, turbidity and dissolved oxygen.

Representatives from the Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute (GVSU-AWRI) will operate the equipment along the Muskegon lakeshore.

"Microplastics have become one of the most pressing issues facing our waterways, both in the Great Lakes and on a global scale; we are both excited and honored to be part of Meijer's initiative to fund new technologies to address this problem," said Dr. Al Steinman, the Allen and Helen Hunting Research Professor at GVSU-AWRI. "It is critical to resolve the microplastic dilemma, not only for the ecology of our local waters, but also for the economy of our coastal communities, who visit and recreate on our beaches and lakes with the expectation they are clean and pollutant-free. The BeBot and Pixie Drone will help ensure those expectations are met."

"The City of Muskegon is thrilled to participate in the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup Program and serve as home to the BeBot and Pixie Drone, which will strengthen stewardship of our precious waterways and majestic Pere Marquette Beach," Muskegon Mayor Ken Johnson said. "We're excited to see these innovative devices in action, and our community is grateful for the collaboration of Meijer, the GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute, and the Council of the Great Lakes Region in advancing this eco-friendly initiative."

The BeBot and Pixie Drones were funded by a \$1 million donation Meijer made to the charitable arm of the CGLR in the United States – the CGLR Foundation – earlier this year. The deployment of these devices are part of the expansion of the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup's plastic capture and recovery effort, an initiative that started in 2020 by the CGLR and Pollution Probe.

"The Great Lakes, which are at the heart of the bi-national Great Lakes economic region, are a globally significant natural resource," said Mark Fisher, the President and CEO of CGLR. "By partnering with companies like Meijer, which shares CGLR's strong commitment to building the region's future sustainability and economy today, we are able to keep our beaches and waterways clean and free of plastic litter as we work to ensure the materials we use as consumers never become waste by adopting a circular economy mindset in the region."

Meijer is also working on numerous store-level projects that impact the Great Lakes, including one with the CGLR to install gutter bin stormwater filtration systems at select Meijer supercenters. The gutter bins will capture and prevent trash, debris, microplastics and other harmful stormwater pollutants from flowing into nearby waterways. Each bin captures hundreds of pounds of pollution per year.

The retailer is in the midst of two additional stormwater projects to retrofit the parking lots at its Traverse City and Benton Harbor supercenters with green infrastructure and is continuing its partnership with the Alliance for the Great Lakes on a handful of beach cleanup efforts.

"The Great Lakes are an area of immense value, and we are proud to be hands-on in the protection of these local waterways," said Erik Petrovskis, Director of Environmental Compliance and [Sustainability at Meijer](#).

Watch video of the BeBot and Pixie Drone in action [here](#).

About Meijer: Meijer is a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based retailer that operates 262 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Wisconsin. A privately-owned and family-operated company since 1934, Meijer pioneered the "one-stop shopping" concept and has evolved through the years to include expanded fresh produce and meat departments, as well as pharmacies, comprehensive apparel departments, pet departments, garden centers, toys and electronics. For additional information on Meijer, please visit www.meijer.com. Follow Meijer on Twitter at twitter.com/Meijer and twitter.com/MeijerPR or become a fan at www.facebook.com/meijer.



About the Council of the Great Lakes Region: The Council of the Great Lakes Region is a binational network of organizations comprised of: (1) the Council of the Great Lakes Region USA, an Ohio-based trade association; (2) the CGLR Foundation, an Ohio-based public charity; and the Council of the Great Lakes Region Canada, a not-for-profit corporation. Together, these organizations, collectively referred to as the Council of the Great Lakes Region, are leading a new era of economic growth, environmental protection, and individual well-being by building the region's long-term competitiveness and sustainability today. For additional information, please visit <https://councilgreatlakesregion.org/> and <https://www.greatlakesplasticcleanup.org/>. Follow CGLR on Twitter at twitter.com/CGLRGreatlakes and the GLPC on Twitter at twitter.com/GLPCleanup.

About the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup: The Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, a joint initiative of the Council of the Great Lakes Region and Pollution Probe that is supported by a network of funders and collaborators, uses innovative capture and clean-up technology to remove plastics and other litter from Lake Ontario to Lake Superior and everywhere in between. Through research, outreach and education, the GLPC is gathering data on litter entering our waterways and identifying how government, industry, and consumers can work together to reduce, reuse and recycle material waste. To learn more, visit www.greatlakesplasticcleanup.org or follow the GLPC on Twitter at twitter.com/GLPCleanup.

About Grand Valley State University Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute: AWRI is a multidisciplinary research organization with GVSU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. AWRI's mission is to integrate research, education, and outreach to enhance and preserve freshwater resources. To learn more, visit www.gvsu.edu/wri/

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For further information: Christina Fecher, 616-735-7968, christina.fecher@meijer.com

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