

# RING LEADER REPORTER

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## **ALLIANCE FOR THE GREAT LAKES SPOTLIGHTS HI-CONE INNOVATIONS IN THEIR ANNUAL REPORT**

In the Alliance for the Great Lakes Annual Report, Hi-Cone is featured in a “Beach Adopter Spotlight”. Hi-Cone is presented as an example of how a company with a strong commitment to the environment can make changes through innovations to help ensure the protection of wildlife.

Hi-Cone is a long-time Adopt-a-Beach™ partner with the Alliance for the Great Lakes and when cleanup volunteers reported encountering a small number of marine animals entangled in six-pack holders in the 70’s, Hi-Cone decided to make a safer product. Environmental myth has a solid hold on the perception that six-pack rings are a leading cause of entrapment. This perception has never matched the facts provided in Adopt-a-Beach™ and the Ocean Conservancy data. While ring carriers are part of the environmental landscape, the facts are that animal entanglements are rare and fishing line, rope, miscellaneous debris, plastic bags and the like, are far greater risks.

### **Beach Adopter Spotlight:**

Bird and animal entanglements were a growing concern on ocean and Great Lakes shorelines in the 1970’s as awareness grew about creatures coming into contact with consumer castoffs that found their way into the lakes and onto beaches. The issue of animal entanglement came to the fore in the 1980’s when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration created its Marine Debris Program.

Illinois-based Hi-Cone, now a long-time Adopt-a-Beach™ partner, set out to fundamentally change its plastic six-pack ring carrier, the remnants of which were implicated in a small percentage of animal entanglements. The company developed a new photodegradable formula for their plastic that quickly becomes brittle and breaks apart when exposed to sunlight. Statistics from the Ocean Conservancy show only 146 animal entanglements from six-packs over the last 25 years, representing less than 1 percent of the shoreline wildlife entanglements that have been documented over hundreds of thousands of miles of shoreline.

Meanwhile, the broader issue of animal entanglement is still being addressed, and the Alliance has been pleased to see NOAA place a new focus on the problem of debris in the Great Lakes. Hi-Cone’s parent company, ITW, is a continuing sponsor of Adopt-a-Beach™, and Hi-Cone employees have held cleanups at Chicago’s Osterman Beach for many years. “It’s an important program because that’s where we can get empirical data showing that our rings are working as they should,” says Julie Hoganson, Hi-Cone marketing associate.

In addition to creating a new, safer, material Hi-Cone also created the Ring Leader Recycling program to recapture and recycle the rings. More than 12,000 schools, businesses, and groups around the world have helped keep the rings out of the environment by participating in the free Ring Leader Recycling Program ([www.ringleader.com](http://www.ringleader.com))