



SeaFeast, a maritime festival held on September 27th and 28th, 2025 at Zuanich Point Park in Bellingham, WA, embraced a zero-waste model by introducing reusable dishware for food and drink vendors to help reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable event practices. Supported by a grant from Whatcom County Health and Community Services, SeaFeast partnered with Sustainable Connections and Perennial Zero Waste to implement this project. Sustainable Connections led promotion and community education efforts, engaging attendees and vendors in zero-waste practices. Perennial Zero Waste supplied the reusable serviceware and provided an on-site mobile dishwasher to minimize single-use items and improve waste diversion. Together, these partnerships allowed SeaFeast to lead by example, demonstrating how events can successfully integrate zero-waste strategies and promote environmental stewardship.

Waste Diversion

An estimated 30,635 single-use items were avoided, which removed approximately 798 pounds from waste streams. However, garbage tonnage slightly increased from the previous year, while compost tonnage remained relatively the same. This may be attributed to several factors. In 2025, one-hundred more vendors attended SeaFeast than the year prior, contributing to more collective waste. Additionally, a windstorm damaged several canopies the morning following the festival, many of which were disposed of in the garbage dropbox, likely contributing to the higher garbage tonnage compared to 2024.

We expected to see a reduction in compost tonnage because the compostable packaging that would normally have been used was eliminated, which should have reduced the overall volume of compost. However, compost tonnage did not decrease compared to the previous year. This may be due to improved diversion efforts by waste station volunteers or the intense rainfall the following morning, which may have increased moisture content and overall compost weight.

30,000+ single-use
plastic items eliminated

Reduced over **775**
pounds of waste





Vendor Experience

Many vendors expressed support for the program and recognized its environmental value, with one vendor commenting, "...This was a great idea and y'all should be very proud of making the effort!" Vendors appreciated the improved customer experience that came from using higher-quality serviceware with their products, including sturdy metal utensils instead of weaker single-use options.

Some operational challenges were identified that should be kept in mind for future events. Vendors noted that the return stations needed to stand out more to ensure ease of use for attendees. Others indicated that the dishware options did not fit their product well.

Cost Benefit Analysis

In total, 32 vendors requested dishware for the event. While participation varied, the majority of food vendors embraced the reusable dishware system. By using the provided reusable dishware, vendors saved an estimated \$225 each in serviceware costs, totaling \$7,200 in savings across the festival.

While the direct savings from avoiding single-use serviceware do not fully offset the reusable dishware system implementation cost, the initiative demonstrates clear environmental benefits. A vendor fee to help cover the cost of reusable serviceware, similar to what vendors would typically spend on single use items, could be considered for future events.





Attendee Experience

An estimated 14,000 people attended SeaFeast, with 42% of them being new. Attendees who completed the SeaFeast survey shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about the reusable dishware. Two-thirds said it was easy to return the reusable dishware, and many praised the project:

"It was so cool and well thought out"

"Grateful for making the reusable dish ware possible and easy to use"

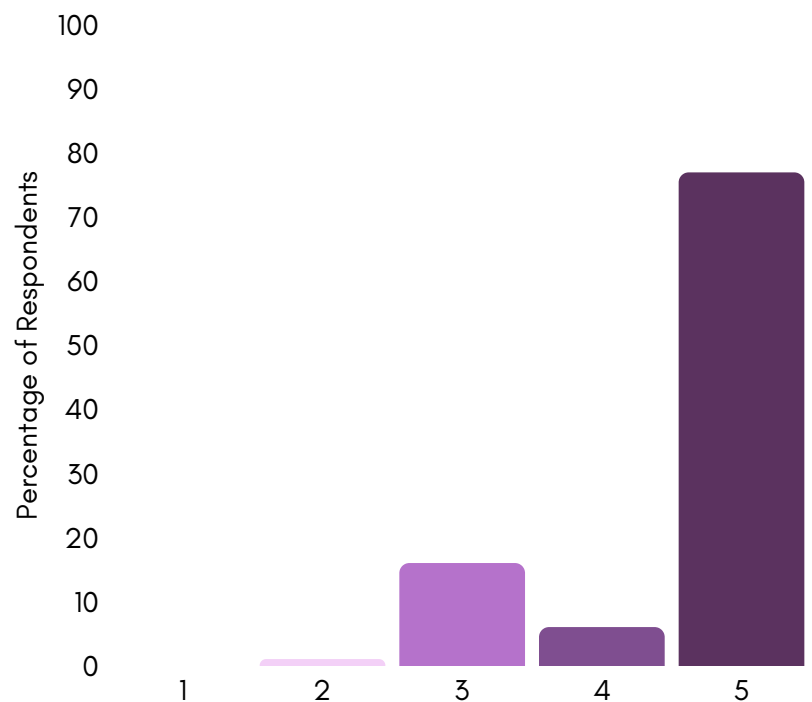
"I really like the reusable dishes! they're much sturdier than cardboard dishes"

"Loved the reusable dishes!"

"I think the reusable dishes are awesome!"

"Reusable dishware was a great idea."

Participant feedback to "On a scale from 1-5, how much did you enjoy using the reusable dishware?"



All project partners contributed in meaningful ways to ensure the success of this initiative, resulting in an enhanced experience for both vendors and participants. The Sustainable Connections Toward Zero Waste team communicated with over 30 vendors to ensure they understood how the reusable dishware system would be implemented. Sustainable Connections also coordinated social media promotion, sharing four posts on Instagram and Facebook that generated 40,000+ views and increasing public awareness and participation. Perennial Zero Waste ordered 12,728 units of dishware, and successfully stocked, washed, and redistributed the dishes throughout the event and supported the logistics of the reusable dishware system. SeaFeast effectively coordinated and planned the event while fully supporting the waste reduction efforts of both partners. SeaFeast also helped communicate expectations to vendors, increasing participation and encouraging feedback.

Future recommendations

- Improve signage at reusable return stations to make them more visible and intuitive for attendees.
- Expand the variety of reusable dishware options to better accommodate different food and beverage products.
- Provide clearer education at festival entrances to ensure attendees understand how the reusable dishware system works and why it's important.
- Adjust waste collection container sizes to reflect predicted waste volumes.
- Consider a vendor fee to help cover the cost of the reusable serviceware service.

Overall, this project was a major success and demonstrates a scalable model for future events. This project paves the way for other festivals to follow SeaFeast's lead by adopting reusable serviceware systems and promoting environmental stewardship through waste reduction

Big thanks to Whatcom County Health and Community Services for making this project possible!



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