

Facts About Marine Debris & How You Can Help



Sources

- Land -- e.g., from roadways to stormdrains, canals, streams, and rivers, out to the ocean.
- Ocean -- e.g., from a boat or platform into the ocean.

Movement

- Floating debris is moved by winds and ocean currents, sometimes far from its origin.

North Pacific Marine Debris "Hot Spot" (aka Garbage Patch)

- Known area of accumulation for marine debris in the north Pacific Ocean.
- Also known as the North Pacific Subtropical Convergence Zone (see map above).



Marine debris is a global problem. It can be found in oceans and on shores around the world.

Impacts

- Eyesore on beaches
- Habitat damage
- Wildlife entanglement
- Ingestion by wildlife
- Vessel damage and navigation
 - Human health and safety
 - Alien species transport

Marine debris is any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes.

Marine debris & wildlife

- Marine debris affects wildlife from great blue whales to tiny coral polyps.
- Exactly how many animals die each year due to marine debris impacts is not known.



Marine debris, particularly derelict nets, are entanglement hazards to marine wildlife. *Photo courtesy of NOAA PIFSC.*

Plastic debris

- Distributed in oceans and on beaches worldwide; not surprising given its durability and floatability.

Plastic debris and pollutants

- Studies show plastics can transport organic contaminants in the oceans.
- The impact of contaminants on plastic to the marine food web is still largely unknown.
- NOAA, with the University of Washington-Tacoma, coordinated an international research workshop (Sept. '08) to help shed light on this issue.

Degradation of marine debris

- Most debris items take a long time to degrade in the marine environment.
- Degradation time depends on many factors such as plastic type, size, thickness, and environmental conditions.

How YOU Can Help:

No matter how close to or far from the ocean, you can contribute to the solution!

- Get involved! Participate in beach or stream cleanups in your area!
- Dispose of your trash properly!
- Remember that our land and sea are connected. Trash that enters streams or rivers eventually makes its way to the ocean.
- Reduce the amount of waste you produce.
- Reuse items whenever possible! Choose reusable items over disposable ones!
- Recycle as much as possible! Bottles, cans, bags, cell phones, and many other items can be recycled.
- Recycle your fishing line or throw it away in the proper place!



Marine debris is a problem we can solve and by working together we can make a difference.