

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

NOAA defines marine debris, a fancy term for ocean trash, as any man-made material that is directly or indirectly, intentionally or accidentally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment.

Where does it come from?

All ocean trash comes from humans not disposing of their trash properly. 80% of marine debris is land-based. It primarily comes from people littering on the streets where rainwater washes the trash through the storm drains and then ultimately out to sea. Some debris also comes from boating and recreational shoreline activities on the beaches.



Storm drains lead to the ocean!

How bad is the problem?

There are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a floating island of trash that is twice the size of Texas. By the year 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. On our local cleanups, hundreds of pounds are regularly gathered from each location.

Why should I care?

Marine debris endangers marine life as animals become entangled in plastic debris, or when they mistake plastic for food, thereby also contaminating the fish we eat. Marine debris tarnishes the beauty of pristine coastlines and can cause economic loss to tourism and real estate economies.

Top Ten Most Common Items

Our oceans are polluted with a wide variety of (mostly plastic) marine debris, including:



WHAT CAN I DO PERSONALLY?

Never Litter

- Always dispose of waste properly, no matter where you are, because trash on the street goes into storm drains, canals, rivers, and ultimately out to the ocean.
- Educate smokers: cigarette butts are the number 1 most littered item in the world. Filters are made of cellulose plastic and are not biodegradable.

Reduce, Reuse, Refuse

If you don't create the waste in the first place, you don't have to worry where it goes.

- Reduce the amount of waste you produce with reusable water bottles, coffee mugs, & shopping bags instead of disposable ones.
- Skip the Straw by politely saying "No Straw Please" at restaurants and bars.
- Reuse single-use plastics at least twice and then recycle or dispose of properly.
- Seek out alternative items that aren't plastic.

HOW CAN I TAKE ACTION?

Clean it Up

- Join a local neighborhood, shoreline, or waterway cleanup. Find one at volunteercleanup.org
- Host your own cleanup! Post it to our website to recruit volunteers. Organize a group of friends or co-workers and spend a rewarding day. If you need help, contact us and we will guide you.
- Commit to pick up 1 piece of litter a day.
- Even if you don't live near the ocean, picking up street trash prevents ocean trash. All storm drains lead to waterways.

Be an Advocate

- Ask local restaurants to switch to environmentally friendly to-go packaging.
- Educate elected officials, city staff, & local businesses by inviting them to your cleanups so they see the problem first hand.
- Speak at your commission hearings and show pictures of the problem.
- Ask questions: Is street litter being removed effectively? How frequently are the storm drains cleaned? Do we have a waterway cleanup contractor?

