



NOAA Marine Debris Program

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program (MDP) supports national and international efforts to prevent, identify, and reduce the occurrence of marine debris to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources, oceans, and coastal waterways. Marine debris activities undertaken by MDP and its partners research the locations and sources of marine debris and its impacts on the environment, reduce debris occurrence, and create educational campaigns to help people understand the threats marine debris poses locally, regionally, and to the nation as a whole.

Every year unknown numbers of marine animals, including whales, seals, dolphins, turtles, and sea birds, are needlessly injured or die because of entanglement in or ingestion of marine debris. Coastal communities spend millions of dollars annually trying to prevent and remove debris washing up on their shorelines.

The MDP serves as a centralized marine debris capability within NOAA and coordinates and supports activities within NOAA and with other federal agencies. Through partnerships, the MDP also supports projects carried out by state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental agencies,



Volunteers helping remove derelict net debris from Hawaii's shorelines.

What is Marine Debris?

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 Sources

Sources of marine debris include land-based sources, such as littering, dumping, and industrial losses. Ocean-based debris can come from fishing vessels, cargo ships, stationary platforms, and other vessels.

universities, and industry partners. Examples of MDP-supported projects include a comprehensive assessment of derelict fishing gear and marine debris on the main Hawaiian Islands; mapping and estimating the number and impact of derelict crab pots in Chesapeake Bay; developing best practices for disposal of tires recovered from critical marine habitat, and research into the impacts of derelict fishing gear on marine species in the Northwest Straits.

Mandates

NOAA'S mission is to understand and predict changes in Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.

Mandates supporting NOAA's marine debris efforts include the following:

- Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2006, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1951 et seq.
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan
- Coral Reef Conservation Act
- Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1901 et seq.
- Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, (Title II) 33 U.S.C. §§ 1401 et seq.
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.



Partners

Program partners include federal, state, and local agencies, academia, industry, and non-governmental organizations working to reduce the impacts of marine debris. NOAA is co-chair of the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee, as re-established by the President's 2004 Ocean Action Plan. This committee is responsible for developing and recommending comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approaches to reduce the sources and impacts of marine debris to the nation's marine environment, natural resources, public safety, and economy. The IMDCC ensures the coordination of Federal agency marine debris activities both nationally and internationally, and recommends research priorities, monitoring techniques, educational programs, and regulatory action.



Diver assisting in the removal of derelict lobster traps (a.k.a. casitas) in Florida. Photo courtesy of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Benefits of the Program

The NOAA Marine Debris Program will create a cleaner environment, ensure safer waters for people, animals, and navigation, and increase the health of coastal and marine environments by:

- Identifying and evaluating the amount, locations, sources, movement, and adverse impacts of marine debris on the marine environment, living marine resources, human health, and navigation safety
- Reducing adverse impacts of lost and discarded fishing gear
- Minimizing the amounts of marine debris entering the oceans
- Designing and implementing materials and programs to inform industry and the public of the problem caused by persistent marine debris and of the range of available solutions.



Beach cleanup at Reese Bay, Unalaska Island, Alaska.

For more information, please visit our Web site at
www.MarineDebris.noaa.gov, or call (301) 713-2989.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

