

MARINE DEBRIS



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Beginning in 2005, Congress appropriated funds to support the reestablishment of a centralized marine debris capability within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The NOAA Marine Debris Program is a joint effort across several NOAA offices to support 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.

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

The NOAA Marine Debris Program supports projects that research the impacts of marine debris on the environment, reduce debris occurrence, and create educational campaigns to inform the public on the detriments of marine debris on a national, regional, and local level. Some examples of such projects include ones that focus on removal of derelict crab pots from the Chesapeake Bay, identification of "ghost nets" or derelict fishing gear in the Pacific Ocean, research into the impacts of derelict fishing gear on marine mammals in the Northeast, and educational marine debris outreach in Guam.



Derelict fishing nets are removed from the shores of Unalaska Island, Alaska as part of a NOAA Marine Debris Program project.

Mandates

NOAA strives to reduce human risk, environmental, and economic consequences resulting from natural or human-induced emergencies, and create and maintain healthy and productive coastal and marine ecosystems that benefit society. Mandates supporting NOAA's efforts are:

- 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.
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan

Partners

Program partners include other federal agencies, academia, 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.

Benefits of the Program

NOAA's 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 adverse impacts of marine debris upon the marine environment and living marine resources
- Creating better marine debris education for the public
- 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 