



Talking Trash & Taking Action



Our ocean provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the creatures we love and the places that inspire us.

Do you remember the last time you were on a boat, at a park or on the beach? Did you see a piece of trash on the ground or floating in the water? The answer to this question is more than often a resounding “yes”. Ocean trash, or marine debris, has become a truly global problem, threatening the health of our ocean and beaches and our economies that depend on them. The good news is marine debris is an entirely preventable problem and everyone can take part in the solution.

So what do *you* need to know about marine debris?

What is marine debris?

Marine Debris is considered any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment (NOAA). In short, marine debris is any trash in our ocean, lakes and waterways.

Where does this trash come from?

Marine debris is often a result of human actions. On land, littering, illegal dumping and poor waste management can cause our everyday items to end up in our ocean. Marine debris travels from inland sources to the ocean via interconnected networks of waterways known as watersheds. Marine debris can also be a result of ocean-based sources. Items such as fishing gear and even cargo containers from boats and marine vessels can be lost if not properly secured or if traveling in inclement seas.

How does marine debris travel in the ocean?

Oceanic currents can carry buoyant trash for thousands of miles. Trash can also become swept up into circular movements of currents known as a gyre. Every major ocean basin in the world contains a gyre, carrying debris inward towards its center. This pattern results in large areas of open ocean with high concentrations of trash, such as the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” located in the North Pacific Gyre. However, not all materials float; many are suspended below the surface and throughout the water column. Instead of an “island of trash” a more accurate analogy of the situation is a “trash soup”.

What are the major issues with marine debris?

Marine debris adversely affects our communities and economies as well as marine ecosystems and wildlife.

- Marine debris on beaches can hinder tourism-dependent economies, and can become a safety hazard for humans.
- Both large and small items can pose a navigation hazard for boaters
- When in the ocean, marine debris and plastics can easily be mistaken for food by wildlife and *ingested*. This can result in blocked intestinal systems, an inability to absorb nutrients, internal injury, starvation, and death.
- Wildlife can also become *entangled* in marine debris such as fishing nets and line. Entanglement can reduce animals’ ability to eat and breathe as well as reduce mobility. In 2010 alone, 488 entangled animals were found by International Coastal Cleanup volunteers around the world.

Preventing marine debris

Marine debris is a *preventable* problem that requires human action. Reducing unnecessary consumption and reusing when possible is an excellent start. Municipalities, companies and organizations can optimize waste management infrastructure and commit to enhanced recycling programs. Stopping trash at its source is one main key to a future with Trash Free Seas.

Dive Deeper with an Employee Engagement Program

The issue of marine debris is a serious yet preventable problem and, as with many global problems, the solution starts with education. Ocean Conservancy’s Trash Free Seas team has developed an interactive educational program about marine debris entitled *Talking Trash and Taking Action*. This program is designed to engage global citizens of all ages and to educate the public about marine debris.

What is *Talking Trash and Taking Action*?

The goal of *Talking Trash and Taking Action* is to increase understanding and action related to the issue of marine debris. The program provides a complete educational package that includes information, surveys, and activities pertaining to the issue and impacts of marine debris. The program concludes with a strong focus on prevention and solutions. All information is meant to bolster a cleanup experience while enhancing a participant’s sense of both our personal and collective impact. The program and materials are free and Ocean Conservancy will provide training for sustainability officers or other leaders who wish to run the program at their corporation or workplace.

What topics are covered?

The program covers marine debris in detail: From what it is and where it originates, to why we should care and how to prevent it. The program delivers insight on some of the issues surrounding marine debris and addresses misconceptions and mysteries surrounding the topic. Building on background knowledge and a Cleanup experience, the program then focuses on solutions: ways in which we as individuals, families, corporations and communities can prevent trash from entering the marine environment in the first place.

Who can take the lead?

Sustainability Officers, Corporate Social Responsibility Teams, or any employee who wishes to lead the program can be easily and quickly trained in instructing *Talking Trash and Taking Action*. Ocean Conservancy will run training sessions and online webinars that will introduce you to the program and run you through the information, exercises and advice on planning a Cleanup.

How long does it take?

Talking Trash and Taking Action is a flexible program designed to fit your needs. Whether you have one hour or five, you can tailor the program for your specific situation. Information is augmented with a wide variety of exercises and educational materials your group may choose to take part in during the program, or bring home for family and friends.

What materials are included in the program?

The *Talking Trash and Taking Action* corporate engagement program includes an interactive PDF along with take home materials that can be used to educate others on marine debris. These materials include trash trivia, a 6-week Trash Free Challenge and children’s activities designed specifically to educate and engage younger family members.

Who should I contact for more information?

We are happy to provide additional information about the program.

Please contact:

Allison Schutes

aschutes@oceanconservancy.org

202.280.6267

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR TRASH FREE SEAS

- 

1 CAN IT
USE A TRASH CAN WITH LID
- 

2 TAP IT
DRINK TAP WATER IN A REUSABLE BOTTLE
- 

3 STOW IT
BE A GREEN BOATER WITH OCEAN CONSERVANCY'S GOOD MATE PROGRAM
- 

4 BUTT IN
WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR ASKING FOR POLICIES THAT ADDRESS OCEAN TRASH
- 

5 REMOVE IT
CLEAN UP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP WWW.SIGNUPTOCLEANUP.ORG
- 

6 BUTT OUT
USE AN ASHTRAY SO CIGARETTE BUTTS DON'T REACH WATERWAYS AND THE OCEAN
- 

7 RECYCLE IT
GO THE EXTRA MILE TO SORT AND SEPARATE ITEMS THAT CAN BE RECYCLED
- 

8 REUSE IT
TAKE ALONG YOUR REUSABLE COFFEE MUG, PICNIC SUPPLIES OR SHOPPING BAG
- 

9 REFUSE IT
BUY LESS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MANUFACTURED ITEMS WINDING UP AS TRASH IN THE OCEAN
- 

10 REINVENT IT
SEND EMAILS TO COMPANIES ASKING THEM TO OPTIMIZE PACKAGING AND CREATE NEW OCEAN-FRIENDLY MATERIALS

International Coastal Cleanup WHAT WILL YOU FIND?



Food Wrappers

Even though many food wrappers look like foil, most are made of plastic.

- Try buying in bulk and using reusable containers to store on-the-go snacks.

Plastic Beverage Bottles

In the sun and salt water, plastic bottles become brittle and break into smaller pieces.

- Opt for tap water or fountain drinks in a reusable bottle.

Breakdown Time: 450 years

Forks, Knives & Spoons

Volunteers collect enough utensils—more than half a million in one day—to host a picnic for every resident of Washington, D.C.

- Entertain with reusable forks, knives and spoons made from bamboo or recycled plastic.

Fishing Gear

Abandoned fishing gear can trap and harm ocean life long after it is lost or discarded.

- Don't leave your line behind; participate in a fishing-line recycling program.

Breakdown Time: 600 years

Cups & Plates

Foam cups and plates cannot be easily recycled and often crumble into small pieces.

- Grab a reusable mug that can go from coffee to smoothie with just a rinse.

Breakdown Time: 50 years

Straws/Stirrers

Volunteers collect enough straws and stirrers in one day to line California's 840 mile coastline.

- Next time you're out, politely refuse plastic straws or carry your own reusable straw.

Bottle Caps

Plastic bottle caps are one of the most commonly found items in the stomachs of sea birds.

- Keep your bottle caps to use for art projects or on-the-go games. Checkers, anyone?

Cigarette Butts

The most common item found during beach cleanups, cigarette filters are actually plastic.

- Properly dispose of cigarettes in receptacles or use a portable ashtray.

Breakdown Time: 1-10 years

Plastic Grocery Bags

Plastic grocery bags pose high risks to sea turtles when they mistake them for their favorite food, jellyfish.

- Toss reusable bags in your backpack, purse or car so they are handy for every trip to the store.

Breakdown Time: 1-20 years

Takeout/Takeaway Containers

Volunteers collect enough containers in one day to get takeout for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day for 858 years.

- Reuse these containers for tomorrow's leftovers or other storage needs.