

Looking Towards a Future of “Debris Free” Waters

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Commission on Ocean Policy
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Coral Reef Task Force

- National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs
- Addressed many of the issues the Commission faces, although in the narrower context of one type of ocean ecosystem



Coral Reef Task Force: Air water quality workgroup

- Monitor and assess reef health
- Strategic research
- Reduce habitat destruction
- Reduce pollution
 - Improve assessments of reef health
 - Sediments
 - Nutrients
 - **Marine debris**
 - Invasive species





Marine Debris –

Any persistent, manufactured, or processed solid materials that are directly or indirectly discarded, disposed, or abandoned into the marine environment.

**(Int'l Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution Conf.
Washington, DC 1995.)**



Marine Debris



- Perceived as a visual indicator of pollution
- Threatens:
 - Wildlife – 267 species entangled/ingest debris resulting in death or maiming
 - Chemical contamination from batteries, oil cans, and other debris
 - Risks to vessels – millions spent in repairs/rescue
 - Economic loss to fisheries & coastal communities
 - Risks to human health
 - Decreased recreational value - beaches & scuba-diving areas
- 80% from land-based sources



Marine Debris

Major Regulatory Authorities:

- Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships – Implements MARPOL Treaty - Annex V
- Clean Water Act (NPS, NPDES, 303(d))
 - Trash TMDLs for Los Angeles River Watershed and Ballona Creek and Wetland in California
- BEACH Act – EPA floatables guidance out soon
- Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act
- Shore Protection Act

1996 Federal Marine Debris Coordinators Meeting

Identified:

- Need for an interagency committee to:
 - Be a forum for international and national marine debris issues such as: planning, policy development, implementation, leveraging funds, exchanging information, identifying needs/priorities/responsibilities, and outreach and education
- Recommended 4 areas of concentration
 - Monitoring
 - Source identification
 - Education
 - Compliance



What is being done?

- Monitoring/Source Identification
 - Floatables guidance for State monitoring of debris
 - **National Marine Debris Monitoring Program** – EPA funded
- Education
 - Curricula
 - Int'l Coastal Cleanup Campaign
 - Sea Keepers Program - USCG
- Compliance
 - Enforcement
 - Trash TMDLs
 - **Reef net removal** – interagency



National Marine Debris Monitoring Program

- Scientifically designed with 180 sites nationally which are monitored monthly by volunteers
- Designed to answer:
 - Is the amount of debris on our coastlines decreasing?
 - What are the major sources of this debris?
- Monitoring in the Gulf (5 years) indicates some possible national trends; national 5 years just begun
 - Places like Padre Island are not anomalies
 - Debris has some regional specificity; mostly land-based
 - There are seasonal variations

Recommendations

- Encourage FAO and IMO to work together to address fishing debris
- Assist in bringing MARPOL special areas into force
- Implement Wider Caribbean Initiative on Solid Waste
- Funding for net removal, monitoring, education, prevention, mitigation
- Revive MERP or similar program
- Increase agency involvement
- Establish interagency coordinating committee
- Send the message: "Don't Pollute!"

