

Marine Debris Clean Up by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and NOAA Restoration Center

NOAA Restoration Center joined forces with the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and many volunteers in 2006 to stage a marine debris cleanup. Over 6,000 pounds of trash was collected and two miles of shoreline were cleaned. Additional cleanups are planned in the future.

The shores of Gravina Island in the Ketchikan Borough have accumulated trash and marine debris over the last 30-50 years. Boat hulls and docks have covered seagrass, nylon nets, ropes, and lines have posed entanglement hazards for marine animals, and overall the pollution has degraded the value of the area to marine life. The marine habitats in the area are very important for fish, marine mammals, and other wildlife. Tongass Narrows is used by orcas, Dall and harbor porpoises, seals, Steller sea lions, and other sea lions. Humpback whales feed off the north end of Pennock Island in the Narrows between Ketchikan and Gravina Island. The Narrows is also used by salmon heading for their spawning streams, including Ketchikan Creek. The area is a major flyway for migrating birds and has a significant eagle population.

In short, the estuaries and shorelines offer a diverse mix of habitats, providing food and shelter for a wide variety of invertebrates, fish, birds, and marine mammals. Cleaning up the shores and removing debris will restore degraded habitats and enable the area to remain productive for marine life.