



MARINE DEBRIS: TRASH ON THE MOVE

For more information visit:
<http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris>

What Is Marine Debris?

Marine debris is trash or any other discarded man-made object that enters ocean or coastal waters. Not only is marine debris an eyesore, but it also negatively impacts marine ecosystems, wildlife, human health and safety, and the economy.

TOP 10 MARINE DEBRIS ITEMS



Cigarettes & cigarette filters



Plastic beverage bottles



Plastic bags



Caps/lids



Food wrappers & containers



Cups, plates, forks, knives & spoons



Glass beverage bottles



Straws & stirrers



Beverage cans



Paper bags

Trash Travels

Trash is thrown on or falls to the ground



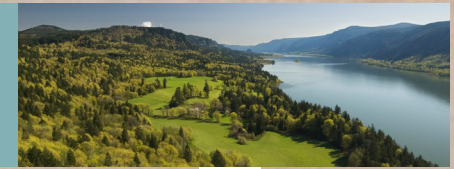
Rain and wind carry trash to **storm drains** or directly to waterbodies



Trash in storm drains travels to **streams**



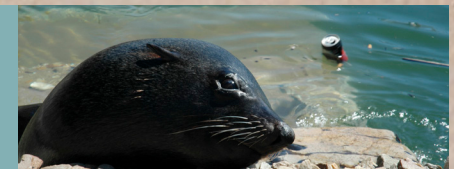
Trash in streams travels to **rivers**



Trash in rivers travels to the **ocean** and becomes marine debris



Marine debris can endanger wildlife





DOWN THE DRAIN

The storm drain, an unexpected culprit, is often responsible for transporting trash into waterways. Stormwater runoff from rain or snowmelt picks up trash from roads, sidewalks, and parking lots and then carries it into storm drains. Some storm drains empty directly into nearby rivers, lakes, and streams, releasing any accumulated trash into the waterway.



MARINE DEBRIS: TRASH ON THE MOVE

Whether you live on the coast or in the heartland, marine debris matters. We all have a stake in our oceans, and we all must play a role to keep our oceans healthy and thriving. When trash is not properly recycled or thrown away, it can travel through streams and rivers to the ocean and become marine debris.

In fact, according to the Ocean Conservancy, approximately 80 percent of all marine debris comes from land-based sources.

COASTAL CONNECTION

Regardless of location, any careless, inadequate, or improper disposal of trash can potentially create marine debris. We all live in

a watershed—an area that drains to a common waterbody—and our individual actions can have an immediate impact on the watershed and ultimately, the ocean.

Approximately **80 percent** of all marine debris comes from land-based sources.

Inland waterways join together to form extensive networks. These water networks are capable of transporting trash, including plastic bags,

cigarette butts, and food containers, hundreds of miles from inland areas to the oceans and coasts.

To prevent marine debris, we must work together to stop trash from entering, traveling, and accumulating in our watershed.





Source: USFWS

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Individuals play an important role in preventing marine debris. Anyone can help reduce the amount of trash in our oceans by understanding and changing the behaviors that lead to marine debris.

- **Reduce, reuse, recycle.** Minimize the amount of trash you create.
- **Don't litter.** Dispose of all trash in proper receptacles.

- **Pick up trash.** Be on the lookout for litter around you.
- **Tell a friend.** Encourage others to help keep our oceans and waterways clean.
- **Volunteer for a cleanup.** Participate in a local waterway or shoreline cleanup. To find a cleanup event near you, go to: <http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/events.cfm>

OCEAN IMPACTS

Although marine debris is often seen as a local problem, it has environmental, economic, and health impacts that are felt globally. The extent of the impacts is determined by the type of marine debris and where it settles in the ocean (i.e., submerged, floating, or within a sensitive habitat).

The impact of marine debris is often intensified because marine debris items are man-made and tend to persist in the environment for years. Plastics, for example, can take hundreds of years to biodegrade in the ocean. Marine debris can release toxic compounds into the water, and medical and personal hygiene debris may transmit harmful bacteria and pathogens. In addition, beachgoers can be injured by stepping on broken glass, cans, or other hazardous items.



Many types of marine wildlife, including seals, sea turtles, birds, fish, and whales are threatened by marine debris. Entanglement can constrict an animal's movement, leaving it unable to swim or eat, and can lead to infection, suffocation, starvation, or drowning. Marine animals also commonly mistake plastic bags, cigarette butts, small pieces of plastic, and other debris for food. Ingested debris tends to collect in an animal's stomach, causing starvation or malnutrition.

Marine debris also has negative economic impacts. Communities are burdened with the cost of cleaning roads, catch basins, storm drains, and coastlines to stop trash from becoming marine debris. Tourism revenue can be lost due to unsightly debris on beaches and coastlines. In some cases, marine debris can even cause beach closures.

