

## **ADDRESSING MARINE DEBRIS IN HAWAII: A DYNAMIC STATEWIDE ACTION PLAN**

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The Hawaiian Archipelago, extending 1,500 miles, is one of the longest and most remote island chains in the world. The Hawaiian Islands are prone to accumulating marine debris due to their proximity to the North Pacific Subtropical Convergence Zone, an area where ocean currents accumulate marine debris. Each year, thousands of pounds of marine debris from domestic and foreign sources wash ashore and snag on reefs across the island chain. In Hawaii, as well as other parts of the world, marine debris threatens marine ecosystems, safe navigation, and wildlife.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program (MDP) has been a partner in efforts to combat marine debris in Hawaii since 2005. The MDP works in cooperation with partners across the US and internationally to address marine debris. Around the Hawaiian Archipelago, a number of efforts are taking place to address the impacts of marine debris. In order to prioritize Hawaii marine debris issues, coordinate between projects, and create a strategic plan of action, the MDP supported a State wide planning workshop that kicked off in Honolulu, January 2008. This workshop brought together over 30 representatives from government, academia, nongovernmental organizations, and private businesses working to address the issue of marine debris in Hawaii. At this workshop, information on marine debris activities and priorities, in both the main and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, was discussed. From this workshop, partnerships were created and a commitment made to begin the development of a Hawaii Marine Debris Action Plan (HI-MDAP), which would include greater coordination among partners, identification of potential avenues for funding, and increased communication. The development and implementation of the HI-MDAP is being supported by the MDP and US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9.

Three focus area workshops were held between October and November 2008. Each workshop focused on one or two of the five identified focus areas for the HI-MDAP: 1) Research and Assessment, 2) Outreach, 3) Land-based Debris Prevention, 4) Beach Cleanup, and 5) In-water Removal and Prevention. Representatives from all sectors participated in these workshops and crafted objectives for each focus area. Information on past and ongoing activities was gathered so that a record of what was done could be compiled and built upon. New actions were then brainstormed and discussed in detail. Feasible priority actions that could be completed within the next three years were identified. During these meetings, a commitment was made by the group to continue to meet twice a year, implement priority activities, and update the action plan as needed.

Finally, in spring 2009, the NOAA MDP and US EPA coordinated a final meeting to roll out the new Hawaii Marine Debris Action Plan to key decision makers, managers, and potential supporters. Information on priority activities in each focus area were presented by the lead partners. This meeting raised awareness of the problem of marine debris in Hawaii and highlighted the successful and ongoing partnerships that are formalized within the new action plan.

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