



NOAA Marine Debris Program

Marine debris is a global problem.

It is not only a pervasive threat to our ocean, Great Lakes, and waterways, but can affect navigation safety, the economy, and even human health.

In 2006, Congress authorized the NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) as the U.S. Federal government's lead for addressing marine debris.

The MDP achieves its mission through five main pillars: Removal, Prevention, Research, Regional Coordination, and Emergency Response. MDP staff is positioned across the country in order to support projects and partnerships with state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry.

What is marine debris?

Any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or Great Lakes.

Vision:

The global ocean and its coasts free from the impacts of marine debris

Mission:

Investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris

NOAA Marine Debris Program Pillars

Prevention

Prevention is the ultimate solution to marine debris. The MDP supports projects that prevent marine debris from ever entering our ocean and waterways through outreach and education efforts that raise awareness and change behavior. These types of initiatives, along with individual decisions to reduce, reuse, and recycle, will help minimize the impacts of marine debris.

Removal

The MDP supports community-based marine debris removal projects across the United States. From local shoreline cleanups to vessel removals, these projects benefit coastal habitats, waterways, and wildlife. Since 2006, NOAA has supported over 100 marine debris removal projects and removed more than 5,500 metric tons of marine debris from our coasts and ocean.

Research

Marine debris is a relatively new field of research, and there are many opportunities to advance our understanding of how it impacts the environment. The MDP monitors the amount and types of debris on shorelines and supports projects to help understand debris baselines, chemicals in plastics, debris detection, plastic ingestion by wildlife, economic implications, and how to minimize the impacts of derelict fishing gear.

Regional Coordination

The MDP supports local marine debris initiatives through coordination in ten regions across the United States, including the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean. Regional coordinators guide action planning and provide expertise to ensure that stakeholders have the best information available.

Emergency Response

Storms and natural disasters that impact U.S. coasts can be an overwhelming source of marine debris. High winds, storm surges, and heavy rains drag household products, and even entire homes, into the surrounding waters. The MDP prepares for severe weather events by supporting regionally-focused emergency response planning efforts and coordinating with partners during an event.



Photo: NOAA CREP



Photo: Peter Kingsley Smith, South Carolina DNR



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