

## *What are some impacts on people and property caused by marine debris?*

Besides affecting the aesthetics of beaches, damage to fishing boats and gear, safety risks for people at sea, contamination of beaches and harbors and health hazards to people are a few of the impacts of marine debris.



## *What are some measures that can be taken to prevent marine debris?*

Recycling is one way of reducing the amount of trash that may end up in the ocean and has the added benefit of reprocessing the materials so they can be used again.

Even better than recycling is to adopt “pollution prevention” strategies that produce less waste in the first place. Ways to produce less waste include reusing materials, using reusable items rather than disposable ones, and reducing the amount of packaging that is used.

Littering should be prevented. One way of resolving the marine debris problem is by proper disposal, which means permanently storing or removing the trash from the environment. Boaters and beachgoers should ensure that trash and other items are not blown or washed away.

Take part in decreasing marine debris!  
Don't pass it, dispose of it!



## **MARINE DEBRIS** in the ENMI



### For more information please contact:

Dr. Teny Topalian  
Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO)  
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)  
National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration  
(NOAA)

DFW  
P.O. Box 10007  
Saipan, MP 96950

tel: (670)664-6035  
fax: (670)664-6037



## *What is marine debris?*

Marine debris includes all sorts of objects found in the marine environment that does not naturally belong there...such things as plastic, glass, metal, paper, and styrofoam.

Marine debris is the term used for any discarded man-made object present in the marine and coastal environment.

Marine debris consists of objects that have been made or used by people and, subsequently, deliberately discarded or accidentally lost.

Marine debris consists of waste items which are slow to degrade, items made of persistent materials such as plastic, polystyrene, metal and glass.



## *Where is marine debris found?*

Marine debris can be found floating on the water surface, mixed in the water column, on tidal bottoms or seabeds, and along the coastal environment.

Marine debris are items and materials that are either discarded directly into the ocean, or brought indirectly to the sea via rivers, sewage, storm water, winds, or left by people on beaches and shores.

## *What are some of the main ocean-based sources of marine debris?*

Some of the main ocean-based sources of marine debris are derived from merchant shipping, ferries, cruise liners, fishing vessels, military fleets, offshore oil and gas platforms and fish farming installations.

## *What are some of the land-based sources of marine debris?*

Some of the land-based sources of marine debris are from municipal landfills or waste dumps located near the coast, riverine transport of waste from landfills or other sources along rivers and inland waterways. It can also include discharge of untreated municipal sewage, including storm water or occasional overflows, industrial facilities, solid wastes from landfills and recreational activities.

## *What are some of the direct impacts to marine organisms caused by marine debris?*

The main impacts on marine life include entanglement and ingestion of marine debris. Entanglement occurs when a marine animal becomes encircled by debris. It can occur accidentally, or when the animal is attracted to the debris or when the animal is curious.

It may resemble food that the animal consumes. The entanglement can cause wounds that can lead to infections or it can cause strangulation or suffocation. In addition, entanglement can impair an animal's ability to swim, which can cause drowning or difficulty in moving about, finding food or escaping from its predators.

Ingestion occurs when an animal swallows marine debris. Ingestion can occur accidentally, but generally animals feed on debris because it looks like food. Ingestion can lead to starvation or malnutrition, block the intestinal tract and prevent digestion, or accumulate in the digestive tract and make the animal feel "full," lessening its desire to feed. Ingestion of sharp objects can damage the digestive tract or stomach lining and cause infection or pain. Ingested objects may also block air passages and prevent breathing, thereby causing death.

Other impacts of marine debris on the marine environment include smothering of the seabed, accumulation and dispersion of toxic substances, environmental changes due to invasive species, and disturbance from mechanical beach cleaning.

