



NOAA's Marine Debris Program

In 2005, with funding from Congress, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) established the Marine Debris Program (MDP) under NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration. This program is a joint effort across several NOAA offices to support national and international efforts to prevent, identify, and reduce the occurrence of marine debris to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources, oceans and coastal waterways.

In addition, the Marine Debris Research, Prevention and Reduction Act was signed into law on December 22, 2006. The Act formally establishes the Marine Debris Program within NOAA and directs NOAA to work in conjunction with federal agencies, such as EPA and U.S. Coast Guard. NOAA and its partner agencies must work to identify the origin, location and projected movement of marine debris within navigable waters of the U.S. and the U.S. exclusive economic zone. The Act specifically targets fishing gear as a threat to the marine environment and navigation safety and authorizes the research and development of alternative types of fishing gear. It also allows the use of voluntary incentives to promote recovery of lost or discarded gear. The Act also authorizes NOAA to offer grants to academia, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, and state, local or tribal governments for identification, removal, research and regulation of marine debris.



What is Marine Debris?

Marine debris is any man-made object discarded, disposed of, or abandoned that enters the coastal or marine environment. It may enter directly when it is lost or dumped from a ship or indirectly when debris washes out to sea via rivers, streams, and storm drains. To find out more, visit: www.marinedebris.noaa.gov.

What are some examples of marine debris?

Sources of marine debris include derelict fishing gear, derelict vessels, and debris from at-sea platforms, ships, storm water runoff, and natural disasters.

Every year unknown numbers of marine animals including whales, seals, dolphins, turtles, and sea birds are either injured or die needlessly because of entanglement in, or ingestion of, debris and trash that finds its way into the oceans. Coastal communities spend millions of dollars annually trying to prevent and remove debris washing up on their shorelines.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program supports projects that research the impacts of marine debris on the environment, reduce debris occurrence, and create educational campaigns to inform the public on the detriments of marine debris on a national, regional, and local level. Some examples of such projects include ones that focus on removal of derelict crab pots from the Chesapeake Bay, identification of "ghost nets" or derelict fishing gear in the Pacific Ocean, research into the impacts of derelict fishing gear on marine mammals in the Northeast, and educational marine debris outreach in Guam.

Mandates

NOAA strives to reduce human risk, environmental, and economic consequences resulting from natural or human-induced emergencies, and create and maintain healthy and productive coastal and marine ecosystems that benefit society. Mandates supporting NOAA's efforts are:

- Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act, S.362
- Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1901 et seq.
- Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act, (Title II) 33 U.S.C. §§ 1401 et seq.
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan

Partners

Program partners include other federal agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations working to reduce the impacts of marine debris.

NOAA is co-chair of the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee, as re-established by the President's 2004 Ocean Action Plan. This committee is responsible for developing and recommending comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approaches to reduce the sources and impacts of marine debris to the nation's marine environment, natural resources, public safety, and economy. The IMDCC ensures the coordination of Federal agency marine debris activities both nationally and internationally, and recommends research priorities, monitoring techniques, educational programs, and regulatory action.

Benefits of the Program

NOAA's Marine Debris Program will create a cleaner environment, ensure safer waters for people, animals, and navigation, and increase the health of coastal and marine environments by:

- Identifying and evaluating the adverse impacts of marine debris upon the marine environment and living marine resources;
- Creating better marine debris education for the public;
- Minimizing the amounts of marine debris entering the oceans; and
- Designing and implementing materials and programs to inform industry and the public of the problem caused by persistent marine debris and of the range of available solutions.

For more information, please visit our Web site at www.marinedebris.noaa.gov, or call (301) 713-2989.



NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,
please visit our Web site at**

<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov> or call (301) 713-2989.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, and the sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans. An integral part of our nation's economic security and national safety, NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems, NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries, and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts, and protects.

