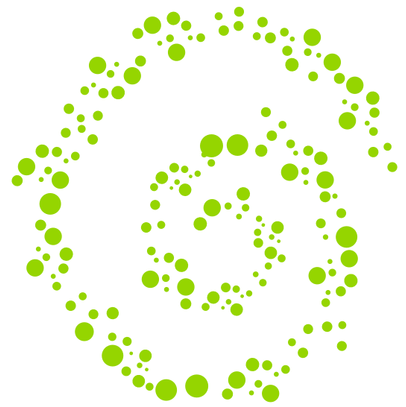
PLASTIC MARINE DEBRIS

Plastic is the most common type of marine debris in the ocean. Globally, we are consuming more and more single-use plastic items, but many countries lack the waste infrastructure to process it. In places where there is good infrastructure, intentional littering or improper disposal may add to the problem.

Plastic does not biodegrade in the ocean. It can fragment into tiny pieces called microplastics, less than 5 mm in length, from weathering and sun exposure. Plastics in the ocean can last for hundreds of years.

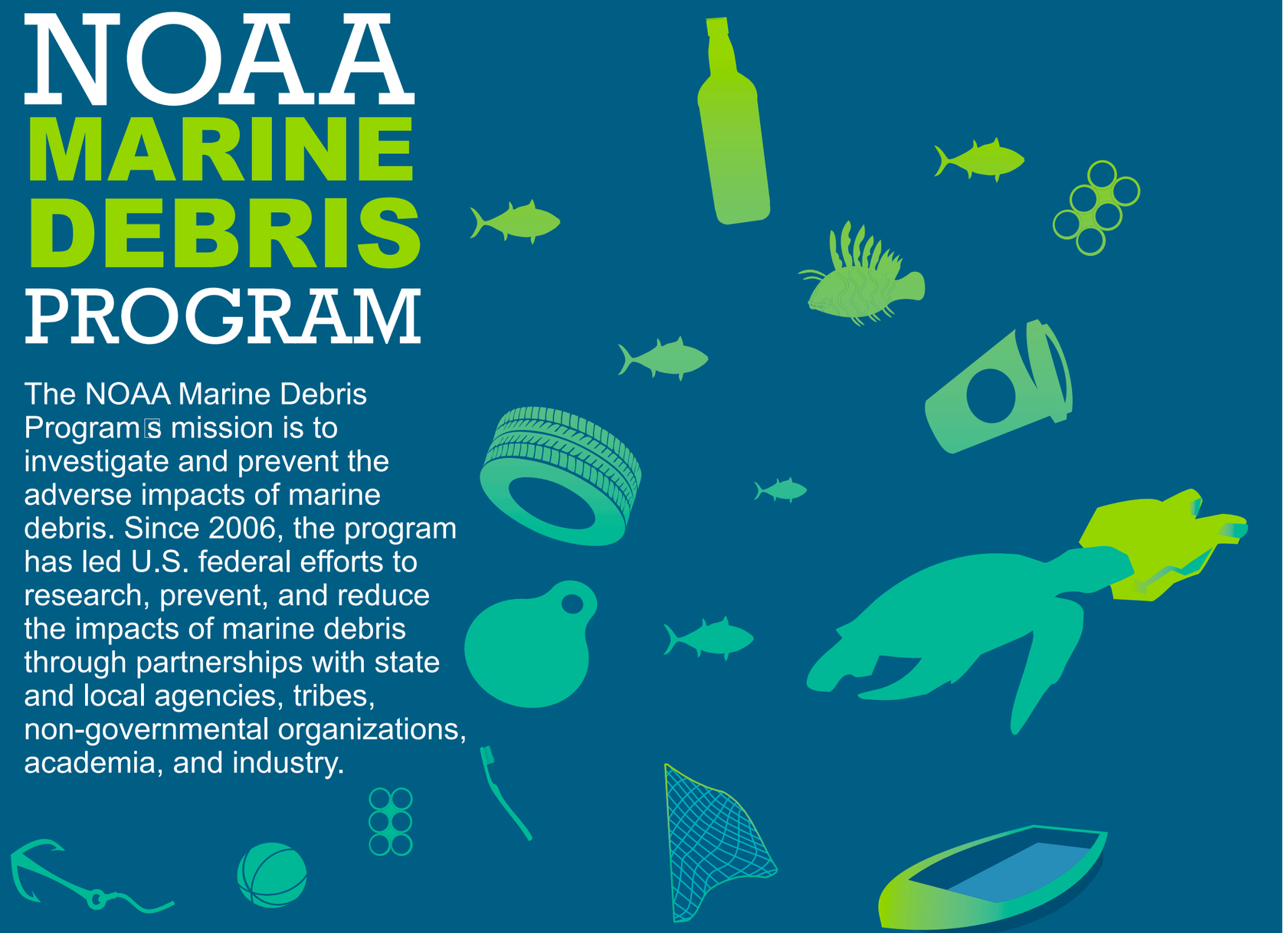


GARBAGE PATCHES

Currents and winds move marine debris throughout the ocean, sometimes far from its origin. “Garbage patches” are areas in the ocean where marine debris accumulates because of converging currents. These areas are not solid islands of trash that you can see easily with the naked eye. They are made up mostly of tiny microplastics swirling throughout the ocean’s water column. Garbage patches exist in ocean gyres all over the world.

NOAA MARINE DEBRIS PROGRAM

The NOAA Marine Debris Program’s mission is to investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris. Since 2006, the program has led U.S. federal efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris through partnerships with state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry.



Our ocean is polluted with a wide variety of marine debris, ranging from soda bottles and plastic bags to derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels.

Marine debris is defined as 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 the Great Lakes.

A majority of the trash and debris on coasts comes from littering or dumping, where it washes down storm drains into rivers, and then into the sea. Marine debris also comes from boating and shoreline recreational activities such as picnicking on beaches.

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

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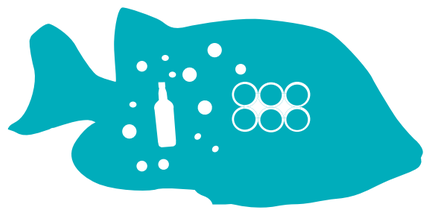
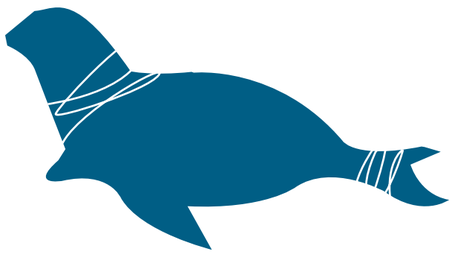
WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

IMPACTS OF MARINE DEBRIS



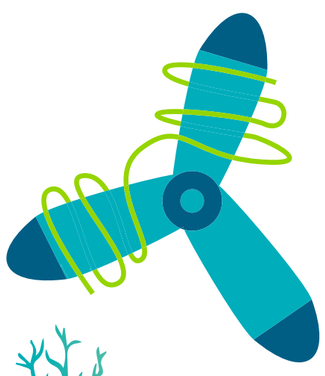
INGESTION

Animals mistakenly eat plastic and other debris.



ENTANGLEMENT & GHOSTFISHING

Marine life gets caught and killed in ghost nets, trapped in derelict gear, and entangled in plastic bands and other marine debris.



HAZARD TO NAVIGATION

Marine debris can be difficult to see in the ocean if it's floating below the water's surface. Encounters with large items at sea can result in costly vessel damage, either to its structure or through a tangled propeller or obstruct mechanical gears.

HABITAT DAMAGE

Heavy marine debris crushes sensitive habitat, such as coral reefs and sea grass.

NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Marine debris transports alien and invasive species from one region to another.

ECONOMIC COST

Communities lose a lot of money cleaning up trash, as well as the economic benefit of beach tourism and recreation.

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

GET INVOLVED and participate in local cleanups in your area.

REMEMBER that our land and sea are connected.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY no matter where you are.

REDUCE the amount of waste you produce.

REUSE items when you can. Choose reusable items over disposable ones.

RECYCLE as much as possible! Bottles, cans, cell phones, ink cartridges, and many other items can be recycled.

DEBRIS FACTS

WORLDWIDE, **MORE THAN 200 SPECIES** ARE IMPACTED BY **ENTANGLEMENT**

AT LEAST **1/3** OF **ALL SEABIRD SPECIES** **EAT DEBRIS**

PACKING BANDS ARE **RESPONSIBLE** FOR MORE THAN HALF OF THE **STELLER SEA LION ENTANGLEMENTS** IN **ALASKA**

ALL SEA TURTLE SPECIES EAT DEBRIS

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