

# Marine Debris



NOAA Marine Debris Program | Office of Response and Restoration | NOAA National Ocean Service

## NOAA Marine Debris Program Alaska

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) supports national and international efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris. The MDP serves as a centralized capability within NOAA, coordinating and supporting activities within NOAA and with other federal agencies, as well as using partnerships to support projects carried out by state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. The MDP has headquarters in Silver Spring, MD and has regional staff members positioned around the country to support regional coordination efforts, track progress of projects, review performance measures, and conduct regional marine debris outreach to local audiences. The Program's Alaska coordinator is based in Seattle, WA.



Marine debris, such as derelict fishing gear, threatens Alaska's natural resources and safe navigation. *Photo courtesy of the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation.*

### Alaska Forum on the Environment

Since its beginning in 2006, the MDP has worked with established and emerging partners to continue shoreline cleanup across the state of Alaska, directly supporting more than 20 projects that have removed over 750,000 lbs of debris. The size and complexity of Alaska's coastline and marine environment presents unique challenges to addressing and preventing these impacts. The remoteness of debris concentrations frequently requires groups to employ innovative and creative ways to remove and dispose

of debris. In many areas, removal efforts have been paired with annual returns to the same beaches to determine the rate that debris re-accumulates and investigate changes in the type of debris that comes ashore.

Gathering and analyzing this information has allowed partners

to uncover valuable new insights into the issue of marine debris, advancing our understanding of its behavior and impacts and identifying valuable lessons to be learned and shared throughout the marine debris community and the general public. These lessons, as well as many others, have been shared at an annual workshop on marine

### Marine debris is

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.

debris research, outreach, and project execution at the Alaska Forum on the Environment.

## Dungeness Crab Pot Study

In 2010, NOAA completed a two-year study of abandoned Dungeness crab traps, or pots, in Southeast Alaska to determine their abundance and what impacts they have on crab populations. This survey, conducted in partnership with scientists from the National Marine Fishery Service Auke Bay Laboratory, used a combination of side scan sonar surveys and diving investigations to determine the location of abandoned crab traps, how long they had been in the environment, and how many crabs were trapped in them, an impact known as ghostfishing. This project investigated over 59 km<sup>2</sup> of Dungeness crab fishing grounds from Juneau to Wrangell, Alaska. The results of this study will help establish whether crab traps are being designed and deployed in the best way to avoid the negative effects of ghostfishing. In 2011, NOAA is building on this work with a new study on potential gear design modifications that could reduce the impact of Dungeness traps once they are lost.



Cleanups in remote areas of Alaska are difficult. *Photo courtesy of the Gulf of Alaska Keepers.*



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## Marine debris is

a problem we can solve together.  
Reduce, reuse, recycle, and participate  
in local beach or stream cleanups. If we  
each do a little, together we can make a  
big difference.