

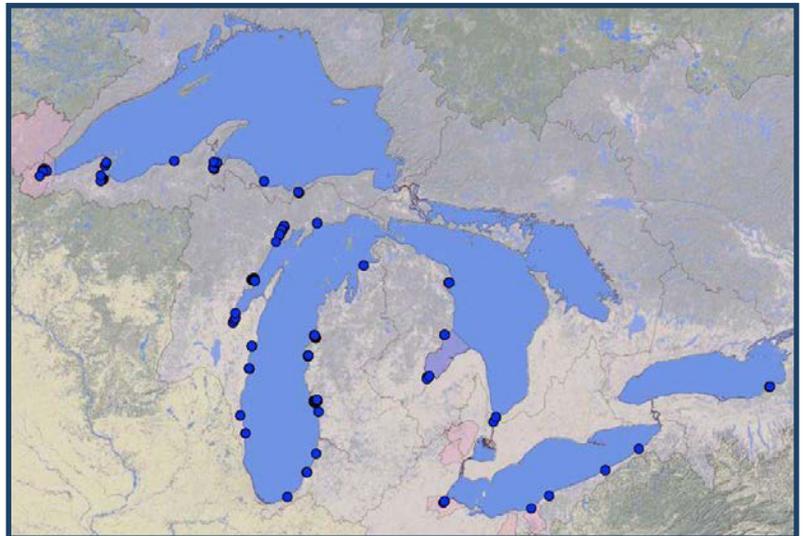
Marine Debris



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

NOAA Marine Debris Program Great Lakes Region

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 has a Great Lakes regional coordinator located in Ohio.



Historic U.S. sawmilling operations. Photo courtesy of NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program (GLHRP).

Great Lakes Debris

The Great Lakes, with its complex system of habitats, wetlands, rivers, and tributaries, is an area that the MDP sets as a region of priority. In the Great Lakes, marine debris affects the beauty of our environment, is a health and safety hazard, threatens our wildlife and natural resources, and comes at an economic cost. From a beach covered in trash to an animal entangled in fishing line, marine debris is a problem we cannot ignore.

Debris in the Great Lakes ranges from trash and litter items that are small in size to large abandoned and derelict vessels. One debris type of particular focus for the program is derelict fishing gear (DFG). DFG refers to nets, lines, and other recreational or commercial fishing equipment that has been lost, abandoned, or discarded in the environment. DFG not only impacts the environment and wildlife but also impacts navigation safety and the fishing community economy. An example of DFG currently found in the Great Lakes region is monofilament fishing line. NOAA has partnered with the BoatUS Foundation to provide monofilament recycling bins at popular fishing spots around the Great Lakes.

Another emerging debris issue in the Great Lakes is historic milling debris. Given the past abundance of forested areas,

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.

the region was home to numerous sawmilling operations in the 1800s and early 1900s. By necessity, these sawmills were built on the coasts and contributing rivers of the Great Lakes. Byproducts of the milling operation (slabs and sawdust) were commonly discarded directly into the aquatic environment, and much of the woody material is still located at these sites. While the exact impacts to the environment are yet unknown, it is believed that this material smothers the bottom environment, limiting environmental productivity and habitat while contributing to the degradation of fish and wildlife populations. NOAA MDP is working with the NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program along with other regional partners to investigate this issue and develop projects to remove historic milling debris.

For more information contact:

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Debris litters the shorelines of Maumee Bay State Park, OH.



Derelict fishing gear includes any fishing gear lost, abandoned, or discarded, including fishing nets.

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.