

Marine Debris



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

NOAA Marine Debris Program Gulf of Mexico

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 Gulf of Mexico regional coordinator is located in Seattle, WA.



Marine debris removal from Calcasieu Lake, LA. Photo courtesy of NOAA Office of Coast Survey.

NOAA Disaster Response Center

The NOAA Disaster Response Center (DRC) and MDP are partnering to integrate successful practices from coastal Texas to strengthen marine debris emergency response planning across the Gulf of Mexico region. This partnership between the DRC and MDP builds upon existing efforts to plan and prepare for the impacts of marine debris that result from naturally occurring storm events.

Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project

During the 2005 hurricane season, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita inflicted severe damage on the Gulf of Mexico coastal region and deposited huge amounts of debris over large areas of the Gulf nearshore waters. This submerged marine debris posed a persistent hazard to commercial navigation, fishing activities, recreational boating, and living marine resources. The team, a collaboration between NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration and Office of Coast Survey, worked with federal, state, and local stakeholders to support the recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. Phase I of this project began in 2006 and employed side-scan sonar to image the sea floor and locate marine debris in Alabama, Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana. Maps of the sonar targets detected along with other information were posted

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.

on the project website. Extensive outreach efforts were also conducted to inform the public of the project's informational products and general progress. In 2008 and 2009, Phase II of the project focused exclusively on Louisiana. At the conclusion of the project, over 1,580 square nautical miles were surveyed and 7,150 targets were located and mapped. <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/projects/gomdebris.html>



Examples of casitas in Florida.

Casitas Identification and Removal in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

This project consisted of three parts: locating lobster aggregation devices (“casitas”) using side-scan sonar, safely removing this debris from the marine environment, and a concentrated education and outreach effort to educate the public, especially to those who use and enjoy the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary for recreation or commercial purposes. Casitas cause damage ranging from destroying the benthic habitat by smothering, shifting, and shading the hard bottom and seagrass communities to altering the natural migration patterns of marine species. During the project, 66 casitas and associated materials were removed from the seafloor.

Litter Free Waterways

Coastal Rivers is a Mississippi non-profit organization dedicated to the removal of marine debris and litter from coastal waterways such as the Pascagoula River and its marshes. The Litter Free Waterways initiative operates in the lower Pascagoula River, home of a number of threatened and endangered species, including the yellow-blotched map turtle and Gulf sturgeon, which benefit from the removal of litter and marine debris from the waterway and banks of the Pascagoula River. In addition to litter, the project is responsible for the removal of white goods (refrigerators, stoves, water heaters, etc.) from the lower Pascagoula River basin. Over the course of the two-year project, Coastal Rivers expects to remove 20 tons of trash from at least 50 miles of waterways earmarked for cleanup.

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.

For more information contact:

Neal Parry

Gulf of Mexico regional coordinator
Neal.Parry@noaa.gov