

Marine Debris



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

NOAA Marine Debris Program Northeast Coast

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 East Coast regional coordinator is located in Silver Spring, MD.



Derelict and old fishing gear being placed into a Fishing for Energy bin.
Photo courtesy of T. Barry, NFWF.

Fishing for Energy

Fishing for Energy is a partnership between Covanta Energy, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program, and Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc. It was established to reduce the financial burden on commercial fishermen when disposing of retired, derelict (gear that is lost in the marine environment), or unusable fishing gear and thereby reduce the amount of gear that may inadvertently end up in U.S. coastal waters. Since launching in 2008, the partnership has reeled in approximately 1.1 million pounds of old fishing gear,

a portion of which has been retrieved directly from the ocean by fishermen. The partnership also includes a grant program that directly supports efforts to remove derelict fishing gear from U.S. coastal waters and continues to expand and partner with new ports to promote old or derelict fishing gear collection through community education and outreach. Recipients of small grants include Stellwagen Alive!, Provincetown Harbormaster, Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Suffolk County, and the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation.

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 majority of Fishing for Energy ports are in the Northeast, with 24 ports participating from Virginia to Maine. <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/projects/fishing4energy.html>

Rhode Island Clean Sweep

Clean the Bay launched Clean Sweep I in August 2006 with funding from NOAA and non-federal entities, with subsequent funds being received in 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011 to continue work. The project has been an outstanding success, with a remarkable amount of on-the-ground work to remove marine debris from Narragansett Bay, and has expanded outside the Bay into the other coastal areas of Rhode Island. The goal of Clean Sweep is to implement a “clean sweep” of debris – including the remnants of barges, boats, docks, lobster pots, buoys, large bundles of monofilament fiber, other derelict fishing gear, telephone poles and pilings, tires, and countless other forms of garbage that have littered our coastal shores for decades. From August 2006 to September 2010, Clean the Bay removed over 1,420 tons of debris from Rhode Island shores and waters. <http://www.cleanthebay.org/>

Research on Derelict Fishing Gear Impacts to the Massachusetts Lobster Fishery

Through this research, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will begin to assess the potential biological and economic impacts derelict gear associated with the Massachusetts American lobster trap fishery. This project was funded through a NOAA–National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant opportunity in 2009 and should be completed in early 2012. Little is known about the magnitude and consequences of derelict fishing gear in this fishery. The three goals of this project are to

1) determine the mortality rates of lobsters and other commercially important species captured in ghost-fishing American lobster pots, 2) determine the degradation rates of ghost-fishing lobster traps in Massachusetts waters, and 3) assess the magnitude of gear loss in this fishery. Results from this project will allow an estimate of the landings lost to the fishery due to ghost-fishing lobster traps.



Derelict fishing gear includes any fishing gear lost, abandoned, or discarded, including lobster pots. *Photo courtesy of MA Division of Marine Fisheries.*

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:

Sarah Morison

Deputy Director and East Coast regional coordinator
Sarah.Morison@noaa.gov