TO PROTECT THE FUTURE,
WE MUST RESPECT THE PAST.

Early Hawaiians had a profound respect for Nature. They believed everything in Nature was related and interconnected and used Nature with great reverence and respect; this is the embodiment of *pono*; doing things the right way.

The people cared for the land and ocean in the same way they loved and respected family and one another.

Each island was divided into *moku*, or districts, which were then divided into *ahupua'a*, or divisions of land, usually extending from the mountains to the sea.

To help them use, manage, and restore their precious resources, each *ahupua'a* created their own *'aha kiole*, or people's council.

The Hawaiian word *'aha'aha* means cordage. An *'aha* cord consists of eight strands. Each strand has its own strength. When entwined together, they become stronger, combining shared knowledge and experience for the benefit of all.

EACH STRAND ON THE ‘AHA CORD REPRESENTS A PRINCIPLE.

The principles speak to the care, respect, and preservation of the elements and spirituality, which made up our world from mountain to sea.

KAI MOANA: Care for the health of our ocean and the many wonders in it, which sustain us.

MA KAI: Care for the beauty and health of our beaches, which are our backyard – our second home.

MA UKA: Treat the land with loving care and it will provide for us.

KAMOLEWAI: Preserve the gifts of our streams and other natural resources.

KANAKAHŌNUA: When we respect the laws of the land, they support us and let us thrive in peace.

KALEWALANI: Respect the clouds, rain, sun and wind, which provide us with sustenance.

KAPAHELOLONA: When we respect the knowledge and wisdom, we learn, grow, and empower ourselves.

KE‘IHI: Preserve and respect the elements and the forces of nature.

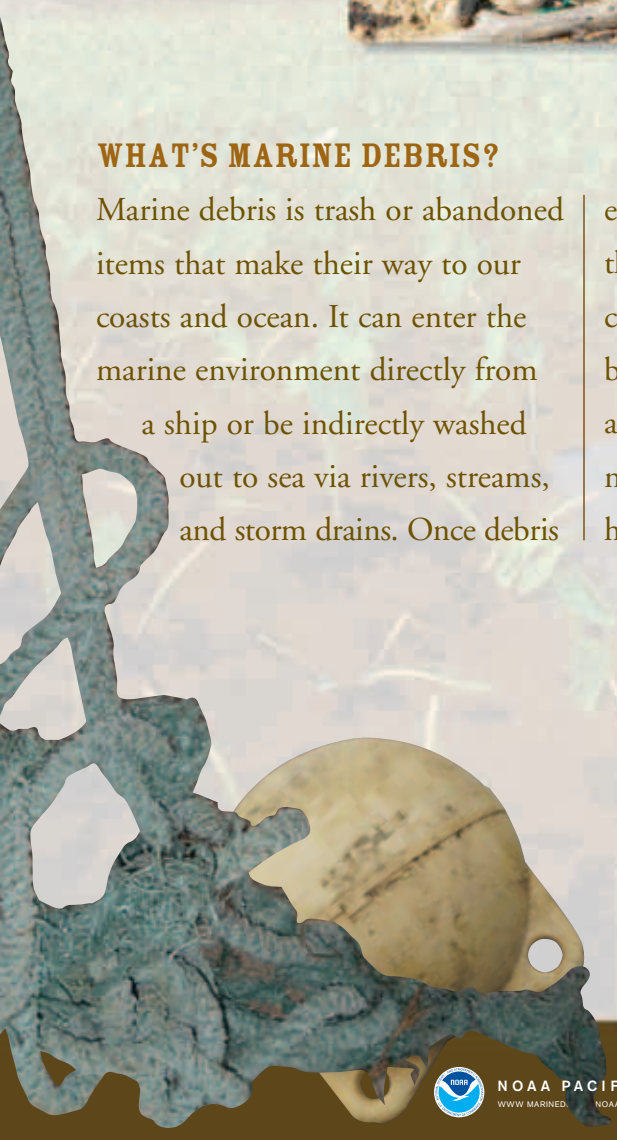
WHAT WOULD OUR KŪPUNA SAY?

If the early Hawaiian *kūpuna*, or ancestors, could return today and see the way we treat our beaches, lands and oceans – and the debris that litters it all, what would they say?

AUWĒ! OH, DEAR!

WHAT'S MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is trash or abandoned items that make their way to our coasts and ocean. It can enter the marine environment directly from a ship or be indirectly washed out to sea via rivers, streams, and storm drains. Once debris enters the ocean environment, these man-made products – such as cigarette filters, food wrappers, beverage bottles and cans, grocery and trash bags, and fishing line, nets, and gear – can travel for hundreds of miles on ocean currents.



WHY MARINE DEBRIS IS A BIG DEAL...

Every year, marine debris injures and kills marine life, interferes with navigational safety, has adverse economic impacts to shipping and coastal industries, and poses a threat to human health. Our oceans and waterways are constantly polluted with a wide variety of marine debris ranging from soda cans and plastic bags to derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels.

Photo Credit: Photographs by David Littschwager and Susan Middleton
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LAYSAN ALBATROSS (NECROPSY)

This chick hatched near a shed, and, as albatrosses do, stayed close by to be fed by its parents, to grow and eventually fledge. One morning Shed Bird was found dead. A necropsy was performed: the feathers were separated and the chest cavity was sliced open, exposing a huge, lumpy, perforated proventriculus (stomach). The proventriculus was cut open, exposing plastic – a sharp rectangular piece causing one of the perforations, two disposable cigarette lighters, several bottle caps, an aerosol pump top, a piece of a shot gun shell, broken clothes pins, toys, and more. In total, Shed Bird's proventriculus was stuffed with 12.2 ounces of plastic and other indigestible material, which probably led to malnutrition and dehydration.
Taken on Green Island, Kure Atoll 13, July 2004

CONTENT OF LAYSAN ALBATROSS STOMACH

The contents of Shed Bird's proventriculus (stomach) were arranged on a sheet of white plastic. Albatross chicks eat what their parents feed them, plastic included. Albatrosses feed where currents come together, and the currents that concentrate food at the surface bring in plastics as well: pieces of shot gun shells, paint brushes, pump spray nozzles, tooth paste tube caps, clothes pins, buckles, toys, just to name a few. If a bucket ends up on a beach, or a bottle ends up in a river, it may eventually wash out to sea. Over time plastic becomes brittle in sunlight and breaks into smaller and smaller shards.
Taken on Green Island, Kure Atoll 13, July 2004

Photo Credit: Photographs by David Littschwager and Susan Middleton
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HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Apply the Hawaiian value of pono, doing the right thing, to your daily life. It's up to each of us to do the right thing, whether it be changing our habits or teaching others about our responsibilities to care for our environment. Here are some guidelines you can follow to help reduce the amount of marine debris that enters our waters. Together we can make a difference!

- Reduce, reuse, recycle. Choose reusable items and use fewer disposable ones.
- Keep streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and storm drains free of trash. They connect via streams and canals to our oceans.
- Whether you're at the beach or playground, favorite fishing spot or out on your boat, dispose of all trash in the proper receptacles or take your trash home with you. Leave an area cleaner than when you arrived!
- Properly stow and secure all trash on your boat.
- Keep your trash cans, dumpsters, and recycling bins from overflowing by emptying them regularly. Make sure they are covered, secured, and can't be opened by strong winds or animals.
- Support environmentally responsible businesses and marinas.
- Join your school or community group and get involved in a local cleanup.
- Serve as an example to others. Encourage your friends and family to help keep our beaches and oceans clean.

This project has been made possible with support of the NOAA Marine Debris Program; The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices and partners to support national, state, local, and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris.