



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA Launches National Marine Debris Education Effort

NOAA today launched a comprehensive effort aimed at reducing dangerous [marine debris](#). The Internet-based educational campaign for marine debris awareness and prevention answers President Bush's call to increase public awareness and understanding of the global problem of marine debris.

"Today I'm happy to announce our government will work to clean our planet's oceans with a new Marine Debris Initiative," said Mrs. Laura Bush today in Mississippi. "The United States will work with international partners and organizations to prevent fishing gear from becoming lost in marine habitats. The centerpiece of this initiative will be our country's Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers. These centers form a network of 20 aquariums, museums, and research facilities, and they include the most prestigious marine facilities in our country, including the J.L. Scott Marine Education Center here in southern Mississippi."

"The most effective way to clean up marine debris is to keep it out of the water in the first place," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "By educating the public on and around the water, we keep dangerous debris in its place and out of the water."

Titled "[Marine Debris 101](#)" the new NOAA marine debris Web site section www.marinedebris.noaa.gov is part of a multi-agency national campaign to provide the general public, as well as avid beachgoers, boaters, fishermen, students and educators with information on the impacts of marine debris and how they can become a part of the solution to reduce debris in the environment. The average American discards four and a half pounds of trash daily including glass bottles that can take one million years to break down, aluminum cans that take from 80 to 200 years, and plastic bags that take 10 to 20 years to degrade.

The information is easily accessible and is presented as downloadable fact sheets, posters, placards, brochures, guide books from partner agencies, activity books, and an expanded photo database for use by the general public. There is also a section designed especially for educators focused marine debris awareness and prevention curriculum for students K-12.

Joining NOAA in this effort is the Department of the Interior, EPA, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of Transportation as well as various state and non-profit organizations.

Marine debris is an ongoing problem worldwide. With increased use of synthetic materials like plastics, marine ecosystems have suffered from the impacts of marine debris. It is estimated that more than one million birds and 100,000 marine mammals die each year due to ingestion of, and entanglement in marine debris. Most sources of marine debris are from mishandled land-based waste. Successful ocean stewardship and conservation depend on informed policy-makers and an informed public.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating [200 years of science and service](#) to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems ([GEOSS](#)), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Marine Debris Program: <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>