



Fifth International Marine Debris Conference

Waves of Change: Global lessons to inspire local action

PROSPECTUS

The Fifth International Marine Debris Conference will take place March 20-25, 2011, in Honolulu, Hawaii. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United Nations Environment Programme are co-organizers of the conference, which will bring together international marine debris researchers, natural resource managers, policy makers, industry representatives, and the nongovernmental community. This conference will highlight research advances, allow sharing of strategies and best practices to assess, reduce, and prevent the impacts of marine debris, and provide an opportunity for the development of specific bilateral or multi-country strategies.



From derelict vessels to derelict fishing nets, there are numerous types of marine debris. *Photo courtesy of NOAA MDP.*



Floatable debris moves with currents and winds, sometimes far from its place of origin. *Photo courtesy of NOAA MDP.*

Conference Objectives

- Share lessons learned on strategies and best practices to reduce and prevent the impacts of marine debris.
- Promote international co-learning and identify possible areas for strengthening international cooperation.
- Exchange innovative ideas, such as market incentives and communications strategies, with a view towards scaling up successful approaches.
- Share the latest research initiatives, results, and methods.

Background

Marine debris is a historical problem that continues to grow. The world's 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. Many animals, such as sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals, have been known to ingest marine debris, which may lead to loss of nutrition, internal injury, intestinal blockage, starvation, and even death. Derelict fishing gear, such as fishing nets and lines, poses entanglement hazards for marine life, can smother the living substrate upon which it settles, and can serve as a vector for the introduction of alien species. Marine debris is an international concern not only because it washes up on beaches and shorelines worldwide, but also because debris can be transferred from one country to another via ocean currents and because it impacts commercial fisheries throughout the world. International cooperation is needed to create public awareness while developing ways to decrease the amount of debris in oceans around the globe.

Cooperation and coordination among many countries was fostered through four international marine debris conferences held between 1984 and 2000, as well as through smaller international agreements, meetings, and workshops. Each conference developed a suite of recommendations on how to move forward. Some recommendations were implemented, and many others showed up repeatedly at multiple conferences and meetings over the



Recent research is focusing on small plastic pieces of marine debris (aka microplastics) and their relationship with pollutants. Photo courtesy of NOAA MDP.

course of the past 25 years. This conference will allow the sharing of information on the implementation, progress, and obstacles to these recommendations and reviewing their effectiveness.

Status

Conference planning is underway. An international steering committee has been convened to advise on meeting planning, help identify funding sources, and ensure wide participation in the conference. In addition, the NOAA Marine Debris Program and the United Nations Environment Programme are staffing a smaller conference committee that will develop and follow a timeline for conference planning and develop the objectives, agenda, and invitation list for the conference, with input from the steering committee.

For more information

visit

www.5IMDC.org

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