Got Trash?

by Carey Morishige, NOAA Marine Debris Program

Carey Morishige helped remove five tons of trash from Kaho'olawe's shores and she did it with a smile.

Maui rises in the distance over the debris-littered shore of Kanapou Bay on the uninhabited island of Kaho'olawe.

■ If you've been reading *HAWAII FISHING NEWS*, then you've probably seen one of my articles on marine debris and the cleanup of the Waiohinu-Ka Lae Coast on the Big Island of Hawai'i. When the final numbers were in from that cleanup, more than 42 tons (84,000 lbs) of trash and fishing gear were removed from that coastline. The Waiohinu-Ka Lae Coast on the southeastern side of the Big Island is one of the many areas where marine debris accumulates throughout the main Hawaiian islands. Another such area is Kanapou Bay on the island of Kaho'olawe.

One of the first things you're probably thinking is, how can there be trash on Kaho'olawe when no one lives there? That's a great question. Kaho'olawe is the smallest of the main Hawaiian islands at 45 square miles and lies off of the southwestern coast of Maui. Kanapou Bay, on the east side of Kaho'olawe, is an area where marine debris, moved by currents and winds, accumulates. On Kanapou's quarter-mile beach you will find enough plastic crates to build a house, enough slippers to never again need a new pair and enough fishing gear to fill your living room. And that's not all: bleach containers, dish soap bottles, pill bottles, toys, bottle caps, soda bottles, plastic buoys, traps, nets, fishing lures, 5-gallon water containers and 55-gallon drums are just some of the many types of discarded items found there.

Ocean 'opala naturally accumulates in Kanapou Bay.

I have had the pleasure to travel to this island to help the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) collect data for their annual cleanup since 2003. I have seen this beach change subtly over time; however, one constant remains the same–the thousands of pounds of marine debris littering its shores.

On the morning of September 9, I took the first flight out of O'ahu to Maui to meet up with KIRC staff. From there, final arrangements were made and we were helicoptered over to Kanapou Bay, Kaho'olawe. Though it was my fourth time on this beach, I was still awestruck by the sheer amount of trash. Everywhere you looked and everywhere you stepped, there was marine debris of some sort. We did a lot of work that day: filling bags; carrying crates and buoys; shouting out what we'd removed so that it could be recorded; filling the cargo nets; and smiling the whole time. We worked from one end of the beach to the other, filling a total of five cargo nets with debris. At the end of the day we had removed 5 tons (10,000 lbs) of marine debris from the beach at Kanapou Bay on the tiny, uninhabited island of Kaho'olawe.

Marine debris is generally defined as any unnatural item that makes its way into our ocean or marine environment directly (e.g., dumping) or indirectly (e.g., street litter eventually washing out to sea). Whether it is a piece of lost or abandoned fishing gear from a boat, or a soda bottle going into a storm drain eventually to empty out into the ocean, marine debris continues to negatively effect marine life and habitat in Hawai'i. The problem of marine debris affects not only us here in Hawai'i, but everyone nationwide, in fact worldwide.

Ways You Can Help

- Throw your trash in a trash can. If there isn't one close by, hold on to it till you find one!
- Keep a small trash bag in your car for that on-the-go trash!
- Take a trash bag with you when you go to the beach. Leave your favorite places cleaner than when you got there!
- Look after your local areas! Participate in trash and litter cleanups.
- Try to reduce the amount of waste and trash you produce no matter where you are!
- Think about using reusable items instead of disposable ones.
- Recycling is a great, easy and rewarding way to make a difference!
- Learn about the issue, and help spread the word!

Marine debris is not only an eyesore; it is a safety hazard for humans, damages boats and threatens many of our marine species. Kanapou Bay and the Waiohinu-Ka Lae Coast of the Big Island are both vivid examples of the effects of marine debris.

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Decades of trash are buried in Kaho'olawe's sands.

Got Trash? ...continued

Marine debris is a problem that we should not ignore, and there are many ways to help.

Results From the Cleanup

Debris Category	Percentage
Plastics*	92.8
Styrofoam	2.6
Rubber	2.5
Rope	1.0
Glass	1.0
Metal	0.1
Wood	0.1
Cloth	0.0

*One entangled shark in net–dead.

Debris was piled onto a cargo net and airlifted away.

Many organizations across the state, like the KIRC, work to help address the problem of marine debris in Hawai'i each year. Nationwide, agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Marine Debris Program help to promote and facilitate marine debris projects across the United States. It is a long road; however, with the help of agencies and organizations like these and the support and participation of local residents, the protection and conservation of our ocean resources will continue.

For more information on marine debris, visit <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov>.

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