NOAA Marine Debris Program

Marine debris is everyone's problem. It affects everything from the environment to the economy; from fishing and navigation to human health and safety; from the tiniest coral polyps to giant blue whales.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) leads national efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris. Its staff, which is positioned across the country, supports marine debris projects in partnership with state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. The program also spearheads national research efforts and works to change behavior in the public through outreach and education initiatives.

VISION
The NOAA Marine Debris Program envisions the global ocean and its coasts free from the impacts of marine debris.

MISSION
The mission of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris.

Marine Debris
[mə-rēn' də-brē'] *noun*

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 Great Lakes.

Community-based Removal Projects

Each year, the NOAA Marine Debris Program supports locally driven marine debris prevention and removal projects. These projects benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and wildlife including migratory fish.

From derelict fishing gear removal in the Pacific Northwest, to derelict and abandoned boat removal in the Gulf of Mexico, the program's grants offer communities a way to engage in marine debris removal and prevention in their own backyards.

Since 2006, NOAA has supported over 100 marine debris removal projects across the country and removed more than 5,500 metric tons of marine debris from our oceans.

Photo courtesy of NFWF
The MDP is a partner in "Fishing for Energy," a program that provides fisherman a no-cost disposal service for old or derelict fishing gear and converts it into energy.

Photo courtesy of NOAA PIFSC CRED

REGIONAL COORDINATION

The MDP has regional coordinators across the United States, from Hawai'i, to the Gulf of Mexico, to New England. These coordinators guide action planning and provide expertise to local marine debris initiatives and projects to ensure that stakeholders have the best information available.

RESEARCH

Marine debris is a relatively new field of research, and there are many opportunities to advance understanding of how debris impacts the environment. The MDP has developed a strategy that will guide holistic, efficient, and impactful research projects through 2016, focusing on plastics, fishing gear and entanglement, and economic impacts.

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, & PARTNERSHIPS

One of the best ways to prevent marine debris is through education. The MDP works to show the general public how their choices impact the ocean, through formal education initiatives and innovative awareness campaigns.

The program also partners with groups with expertise in marine debris removal, research, and education. *Fishing for Energy* is one such partnership, where NOAA, industry, and NGOs come together to provide gear recycling bins to fishermen at no cost. Since the program began, fishermen have recycled nearly three million pounds of gear.