

What is Marine Debris?

Marine Debris is trash and other solid material that resides in the ocean and other coastal waters usually washing up on our beaches; so it is basically litter. The most common Marine Debris out there are plastic bags, bottles, cans, cigarette filters, bottle caps, lids, and fishing nets.

Where does Marine Debris come from?

Marine Debris mostly comes from PEOPLE! Often times humans throw their trash out and it ends up opened and all over. Some of it may be in a dumpster that wasn't closed and when the wind blew that garbage blew with it right into the water. Other times litter can wash into a sewer or island rivers and streams, so when it rains it gets washed away into the ocean. Another scenario can be when families go to the beach for a day in the sand and sun, they may accidentally or purposely leave their trash on the beach and it gets carried into the water.

Another addition to the marine debris are commercial and subsistence fisherman. They may lose or dump their large fishing nets in the sea.

Other times cruise ships and ferry boats intentionally or accidentally throw their trash in the ocean. The trash may be thrown, dripped, or blown overboard.



For information about marine debris you can visit the Environmental Protection Agency web page at: www.epa.gov

Qagan Tayagungin Tribe
P.O Box 447
Sand Point, Alaska 99661

Phone: 907-383-6968
Fax: 907-383-5814
E-mail: QTTEnvironmentalAssistant@arctic.net
<http://www.QTTribe.org/environmental>



KEEP OUR BEACHES CLEAN



Please keep our beaches clean, it's great for our environment!

Japan Debris is Expected to Show up on Alaska Shores

Alaska is expecting to see the Japan Tsunami debris wash up on shore. The load of debris on the way to our beaches is more than the size of Texas. The debris may include anything from parts of houses to vehicles and anything else that floats.

Since the earthquake and tsunami damaged the Nuclear Power Plant, it is said that some of the water that is in some of the debris can be radio active.

The first items expected to arrive may be empty bottles and anything else that floats high on the water and can reach places faster. So beware and remember to look for garbage and in this case debris on our beaches.

Garbage on Beaches & Shorelines in Sand Point



What does Marine Debris do to our Environment?

The Marine Debris on the beach can be harmful to beachgoers. It also makes the beach look unsightly and polluted. When we have dirty beaches people are unlikely to enjoy the environment and more money is spent on clean up efforts.

Many marine mammals, like seals, birds, fish, and crab, will be unable to swim if they consume or become entangled in debris.

When marine animals swallow marine debris they can suffocate or starve. For example, if they were to swallow a piece of plastic, it would make their stomachs full and they would starve because the plastic wouldn't digest. Seabirds are known to swallow small pieces of plastic that they mistake for fish eggs and seals can swallow plastic bags mistaking them for other foods. Trash on the beaches can kill animals.

Ways to decrease or stop Marine Debris

There are many ways to decrease or stop marine debris. Here are a few that may be useful:

When fishing, don't throw any garbage overboard or when trash is full, store it in a place where it will be safe from heavy winds.

Another way to stop marine debris could be when you go to the beach take a trash bag and dump your garbage when you are finished. Make sure to get it to a dumpster.

Marine Debris and Its Impacts on Our Economy

Garbage impacts our economy in many ways. Because we are a fishing community, marine debris impacts our way of living. This is a problem for most fishermen as the fish they are trying to catch are already caught in a net lodged at the bottom of the ocean or are dead because of the plastic and other pieces of garbage the marine mammals have ingested. This causes loss not just for our fisherman and their families but also for the rest of the world with unavailable seafood and prices rising on the little bit of seafood there is.

Fisheries can also be affected financially when fishing gear and vessels are entangled or damaged by marine debris. The costly price of replacing fishing gear and vessels, along with a loss of days at sea for fishing, can cause small fisheries to lose businesses altogether.

Trash in the ocean can also become a problem for navigation. Floating debris can get in the way of boats by entangling propellers and it can clog cooling water intake valves. Repairing boats is both time consuming and expensive.



Marine Debris stuck in a propeller of a fishing vessel.

Photo by:
coastal.ca.gov