

The Problem with Plastic

The Scoop

Even in the desert, we can make a difference on ocean pollution! Some plastic and marine debris comes from fishing gear, offshore oil and gas platforms, and ships. But 80% of it comes from the land—litter that gets stuck in storm drains and is washed into rivers and out to sea, the legal and illegal dumping of garbage and appliances, and plastic resin pellets inadvertently spilled and unloaded by plastic manufacturers. Trash Travels, Ocean Conservancy's 2010 report, states that 60% of all marine debris in 2009 consisted of "disposable" items, with the most common being cigarettes, plastic bags, food containers, bottle caps and plastic bottles. It is estimated by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean. And no matter where the litter originates, once it reaches the ocean, it becomes a planetary problem as garbage travels thousands of miles. We can take action on land to help prevent trash from entering our waterways!



How You Can Help

There are all kinds of small changes you can make that will have an impact on our ocean. Every single person makes a difference! Here are some easy ways to reduce your plastic footprint:

- Say no to plastic straws. Straws are so little that they cannot be recycled in most cases and they are so light that they blow out of the landfill and right into our waterways. It is estimated that the average American uses 38,000 straws in their lifetime so this small change really adds up! If you don't feel like drinking straight from the glass there are many reusable options including glass, bamboo, silicone and metal.

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The top section, '3 REASONS PLASTIC STRAWS SUCK', features three numbered points: 1. A bird with a straw in its beak, captioned 'They harm marine wildlife & ecosystems'. 2. Test tubes with a skull and crossbones, captioned 'They expose us to unhealthy toxic chemicals'. 3. A pile of straws, captioned 'Used for minutes, here for centuries, piling up daily'. The bottom section, '3 WAYS TO STOP SUCKING PLASTIC', features three numbered points: 1. A glass of juice, captioned 'Skip the straw & sip your drink'. 2. A reusable steel cup, captioned 'Switch to reusable steel, glass or bamboo straws'. 3. Paper straws, captioned 'Use paper straws instead*'. At the bottom, it includes the hashtag #NoPlasticStraws, a note that '* Compostable or biodegradable plastics do not break down safely in ocean conditions', the website www.lessplastic.co.uk, and the logo for 'the Last Plastic Straw' in collaboration with 'LESS PLASTIC.'.



- Try not to purchase beverages with six pack rings, but if you do make sure to cut all the rings so that marine life does not end up entangled
- Pack your lunches in reusable containers like tupperwares or reusable snack bags
- Bring your own bags to the grocery stores and use reusable produce bags
- Purchase your own water bottle or coffee cup. It will even save you money over buying plastic options
- Look for items with less plastic packaging. For example, buying a 12 pack of soda in cardboard is more ocean friendly than a six pack with plastic rings



- Make sure you follow the recycling rules for your area. Many recycling centers will throw out loads of recycling if a few items are not rinsed or are not recyclable
- Pick up trash you see. Whether it is in a parking lot or on a beach it can all end up in the ocean!

Sources:

“Clean Ocean: Project AWARE.” *Project AWARE Homepage*, www.projectaware.org/issue/marine-debris.

“For A Strawless Ocean.” *For A Strawless Ocean*, www.strawlessocean.org/.

“The Marine Mammal Center.” *The Marine Mammal Center*, www.marinemammalcenter.org/Get-Involved/take-action/things-you-can-do-at-home.html.