

Marine Debris

PACIFIC

Marine Debris Survey and Removal from the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Northwestern Hawaiian Islands): Maintenance Mode

Marine debris remains one of the most pervasive and chronic threats to the nearly pristine coral reef ecosystems of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). This project follows the successes of a 5 year, large-scale, multi-agency NWHI marine debris removal effort that has removed over 511 metric tons of marine debris and determined annual debris accumulation rates. In FY06 and beyond, the marine debris team in maintenance mode is attempting to keep up with new accumulation of marine debris, estimated to be 52 metric tons annually.



Trained NOAA Marine Debris Removal Team diver carefully removing a derelict net from coral in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. *Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries PIFSC.*

In FY06, the marine debris team, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, conducted land-based removal operations at Midway Atoll. In addition, aboard the NOAA vessel OSCAR ELTON SETTE, the marine debris team collected land-based debris at Laysan and Lisianski Islands, Kure Atoll, and French Frigate Shoals, and conducted 16 days of field operations at Kure and Pearl and Hermes Atolls. A total of 19 metric tons were collected.

In FY07, the marine debris team will again focus on high density areas and accumulation rate zones at Kure and Pearl and Hermes Atolls, as well as on picking up land debris collected by partners.

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is any manufactured or man-made solid material that enters the coastal or marine environment. It may enter directly when it is lost or dumped from a ship, or indirectly when debris washes out to sea via rivers, streams, and storm drains.

MARINE DEBRIS SOURCES

Sources of marine debris include land-based sources, such as littering, dumping, and industrial losses. Ocean-based debris can come from fishing vessels, cargo ships, stationary platforms, and other vessels.

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MANDATES

Mandates supporting NOAA's marine debris efforts include the following:

- Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2006, S.362
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan
- Coral Reef Conservation Act
- Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1901 et seq.
- Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, (Title II) 33 U.S.C. §§ 1401 et seq.
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.

PARTNERS

- Schnitzer Steel Hawaii Corporation
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
- Covanta Energy
- City and County of Honolulu
- Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

Removal of marine debris is important to the ecosystem of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, because marine debris:

- entangles endangered and threatened marine life;
- presents a hazard to safe navigation;
- damages coral reef habitat; and
- may be a vector for the transport of invasive species.

CONTACTS

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Threatened green sea turtle entangled in derelict net debris in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. *Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries PIFSC.*

This project is funded through NOAA's National Ocean Service, Office of Response & Restoration, Marine Debris Program. The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices, as well as other federal, state, and local agencies and private sector partners to support national, state, local and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources, oceans, and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris.