

Marine Debris

PACIFIC

Development of a Coordinated Strategy for the Washington Outer Coast Beach Cleanup and Debris Cache Removal

The Olympic Coast Cleanup is an annual, volunteer organized effort to remove marine debris from one of the most wild and remote coastal areas in the lower 48 states, the western shore of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. This shoreline includes the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS), the designated wilderness of Olympic National Park's coastal area, reservation lands of the Makah, Quileute, Hoh, and Quinault Indian Nations, and the Washington Seashore Conservation Area. In recent years, over 750 volunteers have removed an estimated 20 tons of marine debris annually, mostly non-biodegradable materials. This massive volunteer effort has blossomed under the leadership of an individual coordinator, but without a detailed process analysis or a multi-party, coordinated planning effort.



One of many piles of debris collected from the Olympic Coast. Photo courtesy of OCNMS.

With support from the NOAA Marine Debris Program, partner organizations will participate in a collaborative and consensus-based process to develop a coordinated strategy focusing on safe, efficient removal of marine debris from this remote coast. The strategy will identify roles for partner organizations, outline goals, funding, and operational options, define measurable outcomes and processes for annual analysis, conduct a safety analysis and develop recommendations, assess the efficiency and costs of different cache removal techniques and propose site-specific approaches, evaluate seasonal timing of the cleanup effort, and evaluate monitoring of marine debris types, with implications for improved source identification and control/reduction.

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

Olympic Coast Cleanup, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, Olympic National Park, Olympic Coast Alliance, Surfrider Foundation, Northwest Interpretive Association, Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe, Hoh Tribe, Quinault Indian Nation, and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

With a coordinated, long-term strategy for the Olympic Coast Cleanup we anticipate that:

- Impacts of marine debris will be reduced.
- Coastal wilderness aesthetic restored on annual basis, consistent with National Marine Sanctuary Act and National Park Service Organic Act goals.
- Safety and educational opportunity are maximized for a large volunteer effort.
- Improved coordination of volunteers and partner agencies and organizations fosters a more positive experience and productive process.
- National Marine Sanctuary Program's performance measure regarding improvement of volunteer opportunities will be fulfilled.
- Future funding alternatives and sources will be identified.
- A model beach cleanup strategy will be developed that can be applied to other sites.

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Carrying a motley load of marine debris from Olympic Coast.
Photo courtesy of OCNMS.

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.