

# TRASH FREE WATERS



Trash Free Waters works to reduce and prevent trash from entering U.S. waters and the ocean. We play a unique role in helping states, municipalities, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and concerned citizens work together to explore more effective ways to reduce the amount of litter and packaging waste that enters the water.

## THE PROBLEM: AQUATIC TRASH

Trash that is improperly disposed of on land or into water can have major environmental and economic impacts on states and communities throughout the U.S. 80% or more of trash in water comes from land-based sources.

Aquatic trash issues include:

- Reducing the aesthetic, recreational, and economic values of rivers, beaches and marine resources
- Animal entanglement or ingestion, sometimes resulting in the death of dolphins, whales, turtles, sea birds and more
- Possible human health risks of ingesting microplastics through the fish we eat
- Pollutant and virus transport
- Habitat destruction
- More taxpayer dollars spent on clean up.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

1. **U.S. Regional Strategies:** We support and bring together state and local governments, businesses, and concerned citizens to help identify collective actions in communities that enhance trash *prevention*.
2. **Tools and Research:** We create tools to aid in developing litter prevention actions. We support a range of research efforts to assess the impacts of trash on water quality, aquatic habitat, and public health.
3. **International:** We use community-based prevention approaches to help facilitate trash prevention programs in other countries.
4. **Public and Private Partnerships:** We build partnerships to stimulate innovative approaches for packaging technology, litter prevention, and material reuse.

## HOW TO BE TRASH FREE

The Trash Free Waters website provides a range of tools and resources for trash prevention:

- **[The Great Practices Compendium](#)**, which highlights innovative state and local programs to prevent aquatic trash
- **[The Atlas of Gulf State Litter Control Policies and Programs](#)**
- **[The Flow](#)**, our quarterly newsletter on all things trash
- **[Marine Debris Campus Toolkit](#)**, a guide for reducing waste on college campuses
- **[Unpackage Your Life](#)**, a guide to using less plastic in your daily life



Accumulated trash on the Eastern coast of Niihau, Hawaii

A recent study estimated that without greater mitigation efforts to stop trash loadings into water, ***the world's oceans will contain nearly 250 million metric tons of plastic by 2025***, or approximately one pound of plastic for every three pounds of fish.

—'Stemming the Tide', Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and the Environment, 2016



Sea turtle photo courtesy of NOAA

**Aquatic Trash** is an issue that permeates many environmental programs. Through partnerships we can **work together** to tackle this challenge.



### URBAN WATERS

Trash Free Waters partners with the Urban Waters Program to support waterfront revitalization in major U.S. cities and urban communities across the U.S.



### WETLANDS

Trash Free Waters partners with the Wetlands Program to ensure that trash prevention is an element of wetlands protection and restoration projects.



### STORMWATER

Trash Free Waters partners with the Stormwater Program to help reduce the huge amount of trash that enters U.S. waterways via stormwater outfalls.



## TRASH FREE WATERS PROGRAM

Trash prevention is an important part of many other EPA programs that work to create cleaner and healthier waterways.



### ESTUARIES

Trash Free Waters partners with the National Estuary Program to support trash prevention and clean-up efforts in major estuarine ecosystems.



### HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Trash Free Waters partners with community-based programs to provide help for trash prevention and recycling efforts in rural and suburban communities.



### INTERNATIONAL

The Office of International and Tribal Affairs works with other countries and international organizations to pursue Trash Free Waters goals outside the U.S.



### SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

Trash Free Waters supports innovative programs to reduce, recycle, and reuse plastic packaging, and thereby prevent littering and improper disposal of trash.



### RESEARCH

Trash Free Waters partners with EPA researchers to share information and support new research to better understand the impacts of aquatic trash.