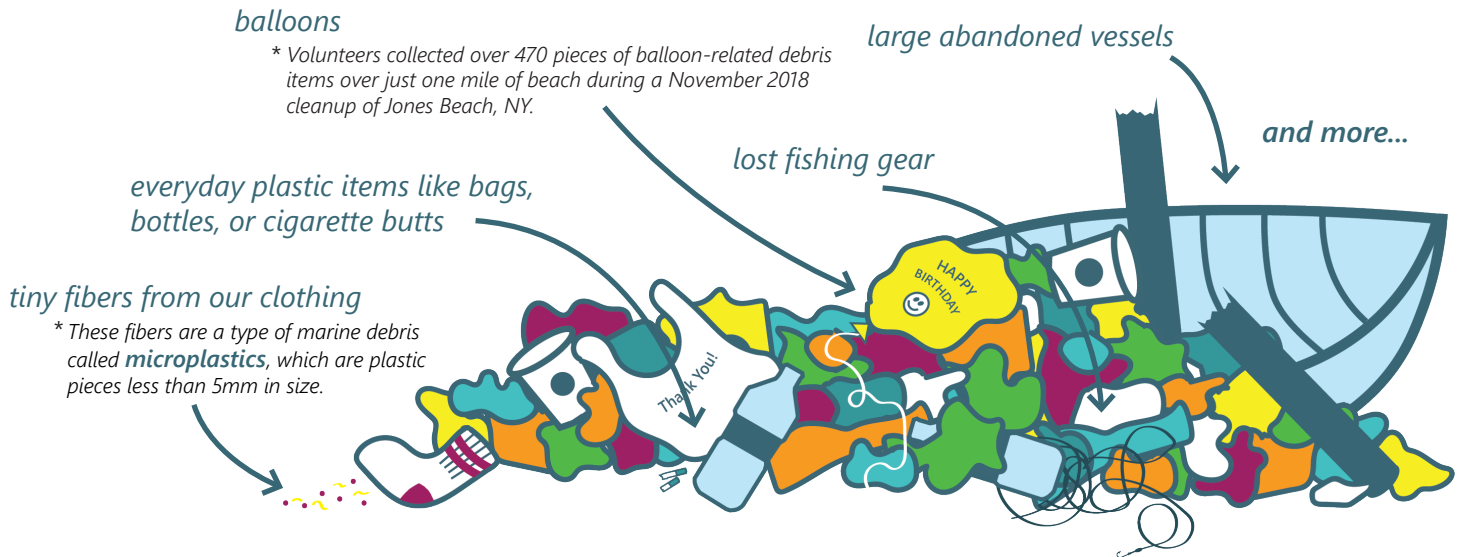


Marine Debris

Trash in the ocean, or “marine debris,” is a growing problem in our marine environments.

What is marine debris?

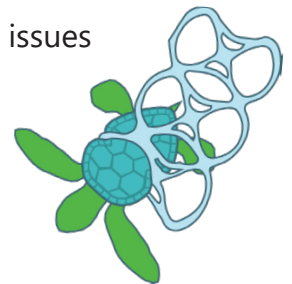
Any solid, manmade material can become marine debris when it enters our waters. This includes:



What are its impacts?

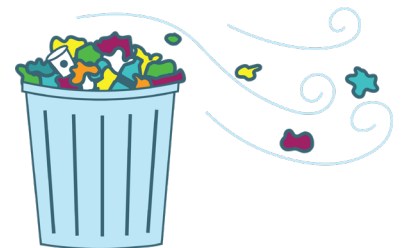
Marine debris is a problem all over the world and unfortunately causes many issues for both people and our environment, including:

- harming wildlife via entanglement or ingestion due to its resemblance to natural food
- creating serious navigational hazards for boaters
- damaging habitats
- even posing a threat to our health and economy and potentially winding up on our dinner plate!



How does it get into the environment?

Unfortunately, the marine debris issue is only growing, as more and more debris makes its way into our environment through a variety of pathways. Trash may be unintentionally left behind, may fall out of a trash can that was overfilled or got knocked over, be blown or washed away, or even intentionally littered.



What can we do about it?



Thankfully, this harmful problem is entirely preventable and caused by people, which means that we have the power to be the solution! There are lots of actions we can all take to make a difference. Scroll down or flip this page over to get some ideas of where to start.



In New York

volunteers collected
295,742 debris items over 316 miles
in just one day! This included:

- over 32,000 cigarette butts (those filters are made of a plastic-like substance that doesn't break down)
- more than 23,400 plastic bottle caps
- 13,500-plus plastic water bottles

*based on data from the 2018
International Coastal Cleanup

Credit: R. Strother, New York Sea Grant

So what can we do about this marine debris problem?

No effort is too small and every act can make a difference! Here are some ideas to get started:

Reduce & Reuse Do your best to reduce the amount of waste you produce and reuse items when you can. Choose to purchase reusable items over disposable ones.

Recycle Although "reduce and reuse" are the best choices, when you do need to dispose of an item, try your best to recycle. Become familiar with the recycling rules in your area and follow them—avoid adding inappropriate items to the recycling bin, or "wish-cycling."

Take Responsibility Make sure you're not contributing to the marine debris problem by taking responsibility for your own items. Make sure you're aware of your surroundings and secure your trash until you can dispose of it properly. When you're enjoying the outdoors, make sure you're leaving it as clean (or cleaner) than you found it.

Pick it up If you see something that doesn't belong in the water or on shore, pick it up and dispose of it properly if it's safe to do so!

Get Involved Join (or organize) a cleanup in your community.

Spread the Word Tell others about marine debris and how they can help too!



New York Ocean is made possible through a partnership between New York Sea Grant and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Funding is provided from the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the NYSDEC.

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