

MARINE DEBRIS



About Marine Debris

Marine debris is anything man-made and discarded that enters the marine environment. Most trash comes from land-based sources, sometimes hundreds of miles away from the coast. Trash on the ground may be swept into inland waterways by rain or wind, where it will then make its way into the ocean through rivers and streams (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Marine debris removed from waterways at a Florida cleanup. Photo: Dave Doeblar

Impact of Marine Debris

Debris in the ocean can spread invasive species, become navigational hazards, introduce toxic pollutants, endanger human health, and injure or kill wildlife. Plastic debris discarded into waterways can break down into smaller bits, but will never fully degrade. These smaller bits, called microplastics, can be ingested by marine life giving them a false sense of satiation while potentially leaching dangerous chemicals into their bodies. Microplastics can then be passed up the food chain to predators.

FAST FACTS



Figure 2. A derelict trap still collecting lobster and damaging a reef. Photo: SEAFAN anonymous report.

Marine debris comes in all shapes and sizes. The most prevalent categories reported include: fishing gear, netting, derelict traps (Figure 2), boating debris, snorkel/dive equipment, paper and plastic trash, and household items.

How you can reduce marine debris

- » **Build a community that recycles!** Learn what's recyclable in your area, and be sure to encourage and educate your co-workers and neighbors about what can and can't be recycled in your city.
- » **Reduce the amount of marine debris from fishing gear.** Collect all unused traps and bring monofilament fishing line back to shore for proper disposal. Look for [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's \(FWC\) monofilament recycling](#) bins in marinas and at boat ramps.
- » **Dispose of trash and recyclable materials in the proper receptacles** or bring trash and recyclables home.
- » **Choose reusable products** over disposable or single-use items when possible.

Report Marine Debris to Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN) [online](#) or call 866-770-7335



SEAFAN is a reporting and response system designed to improve the protection and management of Southeast Florida's coral reefs by enhancing marine debris clean-up efforts, increasing response to vessel groundings and anchor damage, and providing early detection of potentially harmful biological disturbances.