

Current situation with marine litter



Q1: What is the amount of plastic litter in the world's oceans?

A1: In 1997, the US Academy of Sciences estimated that there are 13,000 pieces of plastic litter floating on every square kilometer of ocean surface.

Q2: What litter is most commonly found on the beach?

A2: Major items are plastic and styrofoam.

Q3: What are the recent topics related to marine litter in the NOWPAP region?

A3: Recently, medical waste has been found on the beach in the NOWPAP region.

Q4: Where does marine litter come from?

A4: Marine litter comes from sea-based and land-based sources.

Land-based sources of marine litter are (1)municipal landfills located on the coast, (2)riverine transport of waste from landfills, (3)discharges of untreated municipal sewage and storm water, (4)industrial facilities and (5) tourism.

Sea-based sources of marine litter are (1)merchant shipping, ferries and cruise liners, (2)fishing vessels, (3) military fleets and research vessels, (4)offshore oil and gas platforms and (5)aquaculture installations.

Q5: What kind of damage is associated with marine litter?

A5: There are many kinds of damage.

1. Damage to wildlife by entanglement, ingestion and habitat destruction.
2. Obstacle to safe maritime transportation
3. Damage to fishery resources, including ghost fishing and garbage mixed with fish catches.
4. Damage to factory water intakes.
5. Reduction in the number of tourists who visit beaches due to deterioration of the marine environment.
6. Cost for collection, treatment and disposal of marine litter.
7. Injuries on the beach.



(Courtesy of Toyama Prefectural Fisheries Research Institute)



What is NOWPAP?

The Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) was adopted in 1994 as a part of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. The People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation are currently members of NOWPAP. Each member hosts one of the four Regional Activity Centres (RACs), which are responsible for individual NOWPAP activities in coordination with the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU).

About NOWPAP MALITA

As a new project, Marine Litter Activity (MALITA) was approved by the 10th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting in November 2005. The main objective of MALITA is the development of a NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. Activities of MALITA include collecting and reviewing data on marine litter, organizing meetings to share information and to build a common understanding on the marine litter problem, developing a long-term monitoring programme, conducting educational campaigns to raise public awareness, and preparing guidelines on waste management for different sectors such as shipping, fisheries and tourism.



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What can we do about marine litter



