

Marine Debris In Alaska: Partnerships Keep Coasts Clean and Healthy



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MICHAEL LEVINE, SENIOR DIRECTOR, ALASKA PROGRAMS



Ocean Conservancy unites science, people and policy to protect our ocean, today and for generations to come.

International Coastal Cleanup

- Also known as “ICC”
- Started by Ocean Conservancy in 1986
- 19M+ volunteers
- 440M+ pounds of trash
- 155 countries



PLASTICS IN ALL PARTS OF THE OCEAN

How microplastics accumulate in the rain of Southeast Alaska

By Ned Rozell | Alaska Science
Published: October 28, 2023



The Washington Post

By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans, study says



The Tiniest Pieces of Plastic Are Threatening the Ocean's Largest Creatures



Biologists describe freeing Unalaska whale from 'life-threatening entanglement'

By Sofia Stuart-Rasi, KUCB - Unalaska - April 10, 2024



It's Not Just Seafood: New Study Finds Microplastics in Nearly 90% of Proteins Sampled, Including Plant-Based Meat Alternatives

Researchers at Ocean Conservancy and University of Toronto estimate that American adults could be consuming up to 3.8 million microplastics per year from protein alone

January 8, 2024

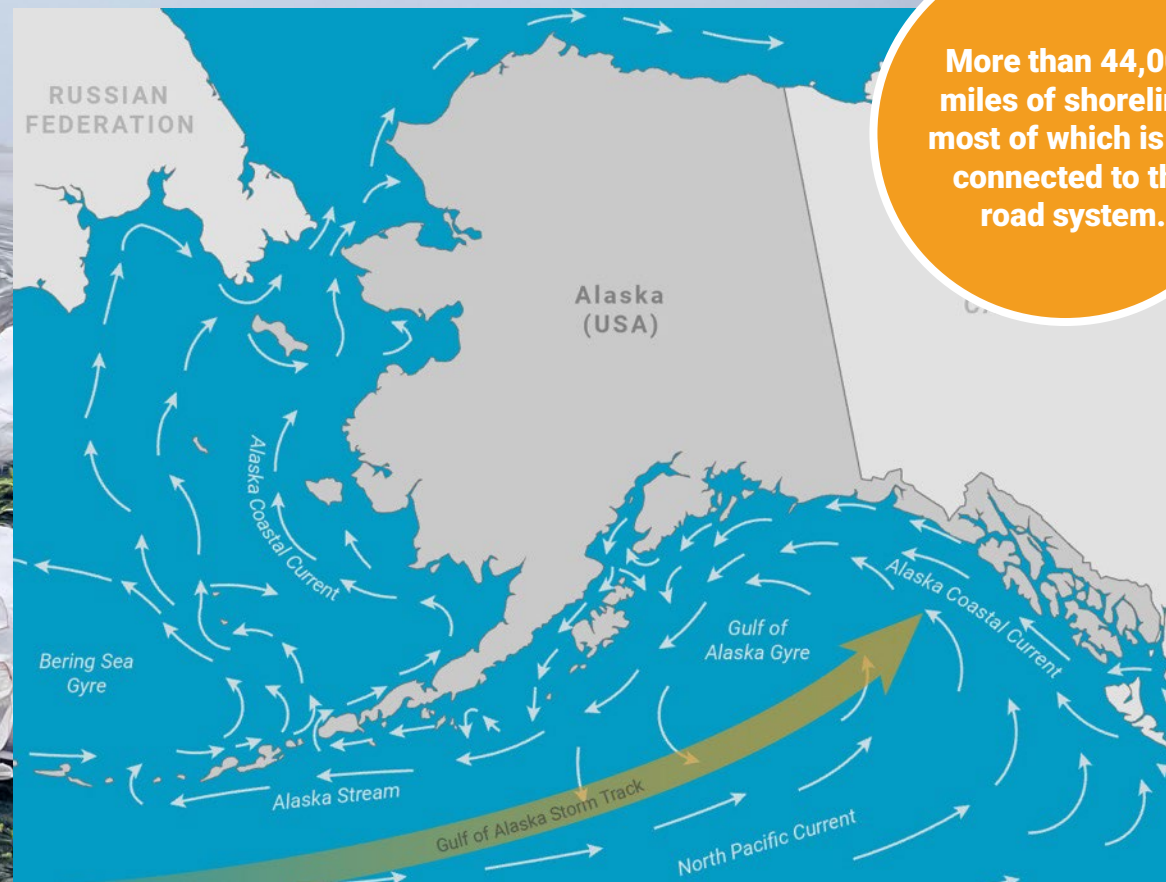
Polar bears are increasingly feeding on garbage

by Heiner Kubry | Aug 2, 2022 | Archive, Science, Science



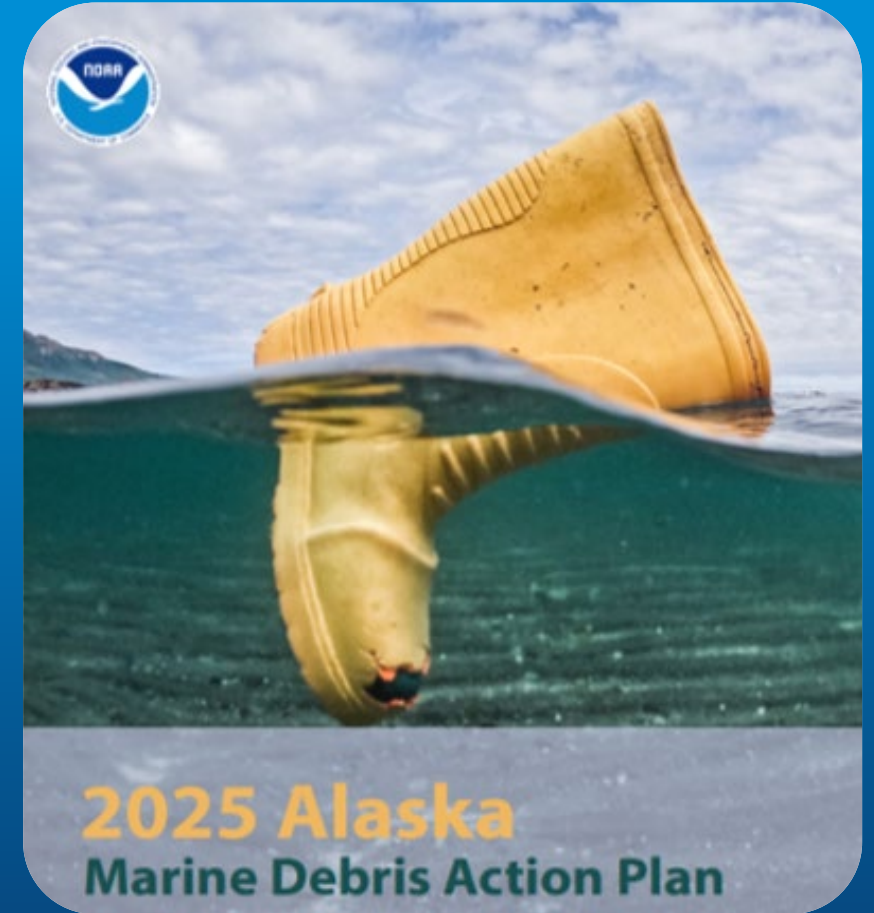
Marine Debris in Alaska

- Marine debris (mostly plastic) accumulates in vast quantities along remote beaches in Alaska.
- Sources include mismanaged waste, abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear, and extreme weather events.
- Removing it can be expensive, difficult, and dangerous.



More than 44,000 miles of shoreline, most of which is not connected to the road system.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Preliminary 2025 statewide data

Total amount of debris collected: 1,502,197 lbs

People involved: 1,436

Communities represented: 34



1 week of cleanup



~5 miles of shoreline cleaned



4,605 lbs marine debris collected



56 participants

Yakutat Tlingit Tribe 2025 Cleanup

*Yakutat Tlingit Tribe – City and Borough of Yakutat –
Yak-tat Kwaan – Knik Tribe – Ocean Conservancy –
US Forest Service – Community Volunteers*



Yakutat Tlingit Tribe





5 days of cleanup

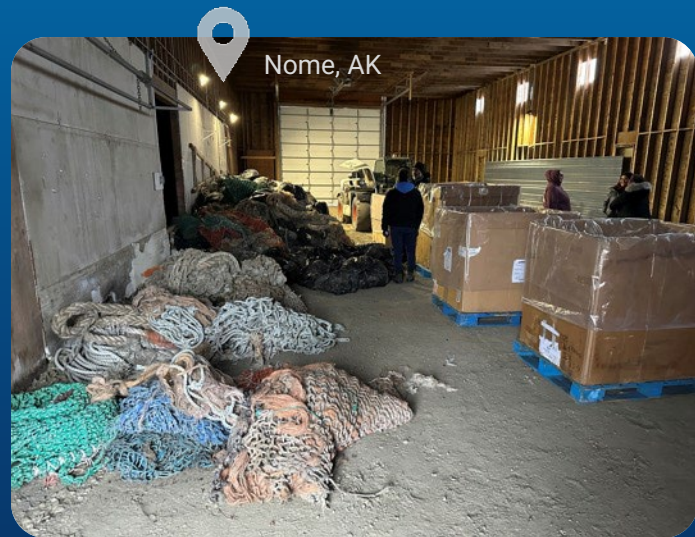
25,588 lbs marine debris collected

94% net & line (by weight)



DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES, SAME CHALLENGES

WHAT TO DO WITH THE DEBRIS?





Marine Debris Backhaul Project

Grant to develop a pilot program for backhaul of marine debris from coastal communities in Alaska to disposal and recycling facilities.



PROJECT GOALS

- Remove existing stockpiled debris
- Remove debris in conjunction with planned cleanups
- Provide local jobs
- Prepare final report with lessons learned & recommendations for a sustainable model



UPCOMING BACKHAUL WORK



Storage & Sorting Hub in Sitka

Photo credit Sitka Sound Science Center



St. Paul Backhaul



Unalaska Backhaul

Photo credit Net Your Problem



Storage & Sorting Hub in Nome



St. George Repacking & Backhaul

Photo credit Mark Hoover



Thank you!

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