

Savaya Bieber

From: Michael LeVine <mlevine@oceanconservancy.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 8:36 AM
To: Joe Hayes; IntiMayo Harbison
Cc: Ephraim Froehlich; Savaya Bieber
Subject: Follow-up from marine debris hearing

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Hi Inti and Joe,

During the Resources Committee hearing on SJR20 in May, we agreed to provide some follow-up information to Senators Kawasaki and Geissel related to marine debris cleanup efforts from the Fukushima disaster and to efforts at the Arctic Council. With apologies for the delay, here is the relevant information we were able to compile.

If helpful, we'd be happy to talk and/or provide additional contacts or information.

We look forward to continuing to work on this and other issues with you,

Mike

Japan Tsunami / Fukushima Funding & Marine Debris Efforts (Sen. Kawasaki)

Alaska experienced a significant pulse of marine debris after the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami struck Fukushima. NOAA worked with partners at the state, federal, and local level to respond to what it called a “Severe Marine Debris Event” for Japan Tsunami Marine Debris (JTMD). In 2012, Gov. Sean Parnell designated DEC as the lead SOA agency for coordinating with NOAA to address tsunami marine debris in Alaska. The Government of Japan contributed \$5 million to clean-up efforts on the West Coast of the US, which was administered by NOAA. NOAA published [a report](#) in 2013 documenting response & clean-up progress in West Coast states, including Alaska. Annual JTMD reports for 2012-2016 published by DEC are available [here](#), and provide a more detailed look at state-level impacts and response efforts. (Relatedly, DEC has also been involved in coordination and communication around [perceived risks to Alaska seafood from Fukushima radiation](#).) Among the outcomes of this work was a series of aerial surveys of the coastline from Cape Muzon to Tugidak Island and Bristol Bay, which resulted in coastline segments being classified according to debris impact: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=8ac40a055c5349b19e20cf84fdbeacf0>. As far as we are aware, these surveys are the most recent conducted.

UNCLOS Pollution Regulation / Arctic Council – PAME Marine Debris Efforts (Sen. Giessel)

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) includes specific measures to prevent and regulate pollution in the marine environment. These provisions, which are applicable to plastic pollution and other forms of marine litter, build on earlier efforts to regulate marine pollution globally, specifically the [London Convention + Protocol](#). They also provide the general framework for more specific marine pollution regulations through [MARPOL](#). UNCLOS does not contain any specific provisions targeting marine debris or plastic pollution in the oceans. The legal analysts that have considered how UNCLOS can be used to address marine debris and plastic pollution generally describe the current international legal framework as a patchwork. It is not clear that a viable path exists to use these tools to address debris from international sources arriving on Alaska shores.

At the Arctic Council, the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group regularly focuses on “strategic plans, programs, assessments, and guidelines” for Arctic marine pollution. Recently, PAME has developed and published a [Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic](#). The Plan aims to enable Arctic Council member states to take collective and independent action to address marine litter (including both terrestrial and marine sources) and associated impacts in the Arctic. Like all recommendations and guidelines developed by PAME and the Arctic Council, the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic is nonbinding.

Michael LeVine
Senior Director, Alaska Programs
Ocean Conservancy
Juneau, Alaska
mlevine@oceanconservancy.org