



Preventing Ocean Pollution Starts With You™

by Capt. Tim Wright (ret.)

(NAPSA)—Recently, our nation celebrated Oceans Week, where much discussion about ocean pollution and marine debris took place in Washington, D.C. Ocean pollution is a genuine problem, and it's important that we identify and address the real causes instead of instituting ineffective solutions.

For example, some think that banning specific products such as plastic bottles and bags will solve the plastic marine debris problem, but it won't. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the sources of pollution include poorly managed landfills, riverine transport, untreated sewage, storm water discharges and industrial and manufacturing facilities with inadequate controls. This is where the effort to control marine debris should begin.

The cause of pollution is not the result of one single product. There are just too many items involved in pollution, and banning one single product will not make a significant impact.

Through annual cleanup events, Ocean Conservancy has monitored the types of trash that wash up on beaches. Cigarette butts, food containers, cans, rope and plastic bottles have all been present in cleanups for the past 25 years.

At the International Marine Debris Conference recently held in Honolulu, the Sea Education Association (SEA) noted that there has not been a significant increase in plastic debris concentration during their 22-year study from 1986–2008.

And while litter is unsightly and not a positive environmental attribute, the National Oceanic

and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Debris website states that there are no published studies specifically researching marine mammal deaths directly caused by marine debris. Mortality is caused by entanglement from lost fishing gear and other unknown causes.

Here are some steps that communities and individuals can take to reduce ocean pollution:

- Take responsibility. Choose items at the store that come in less packaging and recycle whenever possible. It's easy to drop your plastic bags and film into collection containers located at grocery stores and retailers across the nation.

- Participate in a cleanup day hosted by Keep America Beautiful or Ocean Conservancy. These groups have done a great job in advancing cleanup methods of beaches—and the litter collected is litter that doesn't enter the ocean.

- Write a letter to your city council member asking for catch basins to be installed in your seaside town. Like the one at the Los Angeles River, catch basins are effective in catching debris before it enters our oceans.

Ending ocean pollution is an important and worthy goal. Efforts, however, should take into account all forms of pollution and put greater responsibility on us—the consumer—to think about where that gum wrapper will end up if we choose to drop it on the ground.

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