



## The Dirty Facts about Plastic



### Here are some of the dirty facts about marine debris:

- ◆ More than 50 percent of marine debris is comprised of plastic material. 60 – 80 percent of floating marine debris is plastic. Up to 80 percent of marine debris comes from inland areas. Due to its durability, buoyancy, and ability to absorb and concentrate toxins present in the ocean, plastic is especially harmful to marine life and the humans who use the marine life as a food source.
- ◆ In the Pacific Ocean there is a patch of plastics known as the “Eastern Garbage Patch” the size of Texas. This patch is a huge feeding ground for many marine animals.
- ◆ The biggest problem with plastics is that they DO NOT biodegrade. Plastics break down in a process called photodegrading, which means they simply break apart into ever smaller pieces, eventually forming “plastic dust.” Through this process they release toxins which have many harmful effects to the ocean.
- ◆ At present, plastics in the ocean outweigh natural zooplankton by a 6:1 ratio! Fish and other sea animals mistake plastics for food because plankton and plastic, when broken down or in pellet form, have very similar appearances.
- ◆ Estimates run as high as one million pieces of plastic per square kilometer floating in specific areas of the Pacific Ocean.
- ◆ Shoppers worldwide are using 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags per year. This translates to about a million bags every minute across the globe. Plastic bags take 20 to 1000 years to break down, are made from petroleum, a nonrenewable resource, and they are very harmful to marine animals that ingest them.
- ◆ More than 1 million birds and more than 100,000 whales, seals and turtles, and countless fish worldwide are killed by plastic debris each year. These deaths occur through entanglement, suffocation and starvation by ingestion.

### Be part of the solution:

- Bring your own cloth or recycled grocery bags to the store instead of using plastic one-time use bags.
- Reduce, Reuse then Recycle! Buy in bulk. Re-use when possible. Reduce consumption by avoiding excessively packaged products.
- Think twice about buying "disposable" products. (They really aren't disposable and are extravagant wastes of the world's resources.) If you must buy disposable buy paper instead of plastic.
- Avoid buying bottled water. Invest in a filter system or go to your local grocery store and refill your water jugs.
- Keep plastic debris and other contaminants (leaves, pet waste, toxins) out of street gutters and storm drains. This eventually ends up in the ocean.
- Keep beaches clean. Plastics and other debris harm sea life and pollute the ocean. Clean up after yourself.
- Get involved! Participate in beach cleanups if you live in a coastal area.
- Educate yourself and think about where each product you buy will end up when you are finished with it!